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Book of the Year!

Second edition

# Chess Strategy for Club Players

The Road  
to Positional  
Advantage

Herman Grooten

First find the right plan,  
then good moves will follow!

NEW IN CHESS

## **Chess Strategy for Club Players**

**Winner of the ChessCafe 2009 Book of the Year Award Shortlisted for The Guardian 2009 Chess Book of the Year Award**

### **Praise for Chess Strategy for Club Players:**

“One of my three favorite chess teaching books. Grooten supplies nice examples and great explanation in a very structured way.” **Jan van de Mortel, Chess Education Partners, Chicago**

“This book will certainly improve your middlegame and boost your results.” **Gary Lane, Chess Moves Magazine**

“The entire presentation is extremely well done (..) A fantastic and challenging book for ambitious and advanced club players.” **KARL Chess Magazine**

“A highly instructive book for readers who want to improve their chess skills.” **From the foreword by Jan Timman**

“Chess coaches will have a quality supply of superb examples and explanations, and self-motivated students will benefit immensely if they are over, say, 1800 in strength.” **Pete Tamburro, ChessLife**

“It is not easy to find a better book on chess strategy!” **Elburg Chess Reviews**

“Extremely interesting and instructional lectures on the themes: positional elements, positional judgements, and finding the right plan (..) A fantastic book for chess training.” **Martin Rieger, Europa Rochade**

“An excellent teaching tool with over 400 pages of clear instruction.” **Joe Petrolito, Australasian Chess Magazine**

“The depth is very impressive, with lucidity and thoroughness going hand in hand.” **Marshtower Chess Reviews**

“Herman Grooten did a first-class job. In each chapter he clearly explains what he wants to achieve and subsequently gives clear examples. This is outstanding

training material for club players.” **Richard Vedder, Schakers.info**

“Excellent (..) Literally hundreds of instructive examples.” **Paul Motwani, The Scotsman**

“A good basis for chess coaches to teach beginners systematically the principles of chess strategy (..) And an expert course for self study, as well.” **German Federation for Correspondence Chess**

“An outstanding positional primer.” **Steve Goldberg, ChessCafe**

I would like to dedicate this book to my late father, Tom Grooten, who passed away on 12 September 2008 at the age of 80. My father was always a great source of inspiration for my chess career.

After he had married Ellen Asselbergs in 1957, my parents emigrated in the same year to Curacao (the Netherlands Antilles), where I was born in 1958, as the first of six children.

My father was an avid chess player, albeit at a modest level, and he taught me the rules when I was seven. Although I cannot remember it, he took me as a child to the famous Candidates’ tournament in 1962 (where the Czech Filip and the Americans Fischer and Benkö took on the Soviet players Geller, Keres, Kortchnoi, Petrosian and Tal), which was played on our island. He talked a lot about this afterwards, and when Fischer took the world title from Spassky in Reykjavik 1972, I was definitively ‘lost’ to the game of chess...

Herman Grooten

# **Chess Strategy for Club Players**

**The Road to Positional Advantage**

**Second Edition      New In Chess 2010**



Q New In Chess

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## Foreword by Jan Timman

Loek van Wely once said of Herman Grooten that his positional rating was much higher than his tactical rating. This is clearly visible in his play and in his writings and is also reflected in his work as a trainer of such strong players as Van Wely himself and Jan Werle. In my confrontations with these grandmasters I could not help but notice a clear predilection for positional play

In this ambitious and well-thought-out book, *Chess Strategy for Club Players*, it is gratifying to read that Herman Grooten has been inspired, among others, by my book *The Art of Analysis*. As a player and an analyst I also tend to look first at the strategic features in a position. Obviously, I am familiar with the principles of Steinitz, but this rich book has taught me a lot of new insights and ideas. For example, it was a surprise to read that Soviet players were spoon-fed with Steinitz's Elements, as in my contacts with them I had never noticed this. In my experience Soviet players never mentioned Steinitz, firstly because they did not have access to a lot of 'Outside' information, secondly because whenever a 'Steinitzean principle' was under discussion they would invariably come up with the name of a Russian writer who had made the same invention.

As for myself, when I was a young chess student I didn't get to know these strategic principles through Steinitz's or Lasker's works, but by reading the manuals of our legendary fellow countryman Dr Max Euwe.

Herman Grooten has considerably modernized and updated the work of Steinitz. Later developments are also investigated and given a place in this extensive survey of chess strategy. With his great experience as a trainer, he manages to display educational insights that can help the reader increase his playing strength.

What gives added value to this work is that many of the modern examples have been derived from training sessions conducted by the author himself. It was highly interesting to read about various experiments he has conducted with his pupils. They illustrate the amount of creativity with which these basic principles can be treated in practical chess. Of course, famous experiments like the ones by Prof. A.D. de Groot have also found a place in this book. As the author is also a strong practical player who has participated in several Dutch championships, he has enriched his book with a lively account of chess life in the Netherlands in the past 30 years. The episode in which Hein Donner taught Rob Hartoch a lesson

about a knight that seemed active but was doing nothing, brought back some fond memories. Donner's brilliant account of this incident can be found in his book *The King*.

In sum, this is a highly instructive book for readers who want to improve their chess skills, but it is much more than that. Herman Grooten has woven a rich tapestry of chess knowledge, science, humour and, above all, love for our great game.

*Jan Timman*

*Arnhem, March 2009*

## Preface

This book has been written for ambitious club players and ‘tournament sharks’. It is an attempt to answer the question many players ask themselves: ‘The opening is over, how should I continue the game?’.

In order to answer this question, I have taken Wilhelm Steinitz’s Table of Elements as a guideline. Steinitz’s strategic principles provide a good foundation to tackle the difficult problem of identifying the positional features in any arbitrary middlegame situation, and to devise the correct strategy on that basis. In my career as a chess trainer, which spans over 30 years, I have often felt the need to pass on general rules, principles, dogmas and advice. Of course I realize that fundamental principles can be formulated in chess, but at the same time the game is full of exceptions to those rules and principles. On the one hand, this is frustrating during training work, because the moment you teach a rule, you will immediately be confronted with its exception. On the other hand, it is a challenge for me to provide chess students with stepping-stones, in such a way that they keep an eye open for special details. Besides, I resolved to try and teach a sound (and, for them, often new) line of thinking when personally coaching talented youngsters. This line of thought is elaborated in Chapter 3, and in many cases it has proved to be a successful formula for solving difficult strategic problems.

To achieve a better understanding of middlegame situations, it is advisable to practice with them. At the end of each chapter on one of Steinitz’s Elements you will find four exercises. As there are 16 elements, you can find 64 exercises which are answered in detail at the end of the book. Almost all exercises are of a strategic nature – which does not exclude tactics!

The difficulty lies mainly in balancing the different ideas against each other. This is not easy, and the reader will need a respectable basic level for this. But the model examples have been chosen in such a way that the theme emerges as clearly as possible. At the same time I have tried to collect a number of masterly examples from chess history.

Should the exercises indeed be too difficult for you, then you can always play through the solutions. In a few other chapters you can train your understanding by doing a quiz. Take a board, play through the game and try to answer the questions. The details follow immediately after you have given the answer.

Finally, there are a few special chapters where some interesting reflections and

‘training experiments’ are deeply investigated.

Many diagram positions in this book have been tested in training sessions of talented youngsters I have had in my charge for a while, either during private training, or in group sessions. At the risk of forgetting someone, I’d like to mention a few names of players who have managed to achieve a title at a young age. The best-known are GM Loek van Wely GM Jan Werle, IM Wouter Spoelman, IM Robin Swinkels, IM Vincent Rothuis and IM Ali Bitalzadeh. My thanks also go out to Mark Timmermans, who has checked all the exercises.

*Herman Grooten,  
Eindhoven, March 2009*

# Chapter 1

## Steinitz's Elements

### 1.1 Introduction

In present-day chess, every self-respecting player uses a computer with the most popular chess programs. Besides the known databases, in which millions of games can be found, most chess fans use strong engines to scrutinize their own games.

Ever since Kasparov lost his match with Deep Blue and Kramnik went down in a match with Deep Fritz, it looks as if humankind has definitely lost the battle with the machine. According to the Dutch grandmaster and columnist Hans Ree, this is a blessing for chess. 'We human beings are finally on our own again', he once quipped with great satisfaction.

This book is all about the question with which every club player and tournament shark is struggling: the opening is over – how to continue the game?

As long as we don't play against computers, we can permit ourselves to make (tactical) mistakes. At club level, but also in the international tournament arena, nobody is capable of turning out a perfect game. And this is just as well, since that's what makes our game so exciting and fascinating. Precisely at such moments, when the mistakes crop up, the game is all about outwitting your opponent.

How do games develop in general? After the opening a struggle unfolds where the main purpose is to play your pieces to good squares. But which squares are good? And how do we determine this?

Several times in the game – of course, depending on the type of position we find ourselves in – concrete calculation is needed, and we have to take stock of the tactical motifs. But in a substantial part of the game there is nothing concrete to calculate, and we have to try to improve our position. Precisely for those cases, we must accumulate a certain amount of understanding of how to go about this. In this book we offer a guideline for making well-considered choices in this area. Of course, we should not forget that strategy and tactics are inextricably bound up with each other. I myself am known as a strategist, but to my detriment I have to confess that I spoil many a beautiful position by tactical mistakes. At such



moments the fate of a chess player is cruel. In a game you have made 39 great moves, and then you produce one disgustingly bad one – in such cases you curse yourself for ever having given in to this addiction...

Fortunately, many chess players have a selective memory – they mainly remember their great achievements and banish their horrible blunders from their memory

## 1.2 Opening theory

The importance of opening theory is grossly overestimated. Obviously, the knowledge of opening moves comes in handy when setting up a chess game, but this knowledge alone does not bring universal happiness. After this you still have to play chess, and for that other things will require attention.

Six-time Dutch champion GM Loek van Wely gave his opinion on this subject in an interview with the Dutch chess pro-motor Karel van Delft in 1996: ‘With many Dutch youth players, opening knowledge is heavily over-developed. It is better for them to gain more understanding in the middle- and endgame by studying chess books. This irritates me now and then. They know all kinds of opening variations. It’s as if they are reciting a lesson. And as soon as it’s time to play real chess, they often understand nothing from this opening. Take the Sveshnikov Sicilian. Even with my rating, I hardly understand it. It would be better for them to study the Dragon or the King’s Indian. They can learn something there. I only started to study openings seriously when I had a 2400 rating.’

The entire interview can be read in the interesting book with the title *Schaaktalent ontwikkelen (Developing chess talent)*, published by Karel van Delft and his son, IM Merijn van Delft, in 2008. An English translation of this book is planned for 2010.

Also the famous Russian chess trainer Mark Dvoretsky expressed similar sentiments about this craving for opening knowledge. In the book *The Chess Instructor 2009* (New In Chess), he writes: ‘A chessplayer should not become a slave of his opening knowledge’. He analyses a game between the Dutch players Ted Barendse and the then 18-year-old Merijn van Delft (now a good IM). In his observations on this game Dvoretsky points at the following: ‘the opening moves were made at the level of the leading grandmasters in the world. But as soon as knowledge came to an end, there promptly followed some ridiculous mistakes. So how should a young player proceed further: continue to perfect his opening repertoire, or nevertheless switch to other problems?’

If even such a successful coach addresses us like this, who are we to turn a deaf ear to such advice?

Yet, many (youth) players cannot be convinced of this. And this is understandable. With the current computers and advanced tools you can spend quite a lot of time on openings. The subject matter is concrete, and you will quickly get the feeling that you are doing useful work. But, as said, its use is quite relative. Still, what is the alternative? What *should* you do to get better? As there is no ready-made answer to this question, most players continue on the chosen path.

This book aims to take another course. Our intention is to enhance the understanding of the reader. Questions like ‘How do I devise a plan?’ or ‘What are the characteristic features of this position?’ actually play the most important role here.

Experience teaches us that the player who understands the position best, has the greatest chance to end up the winner. A good player who is surprised in the opening, often still manages to save himself from the hornets’ nest he finds himself in, because he knows what he should look for.

In this book we devote attention to the treatment of the middlegame. We lay emphasis on determining the strategic characteristics of the position. Many treatises have already been written on the diverse aspects of the middlegame; however, not much has been written about the essence of positional play.

In the former Soviet Union, the importance of such an approach was recognized. Attempts were made to dissect the middlegame into its characteristic features, so as to offer guidelines which the chess student could turn to profit. My many years’ work as a trainer also made me realize that in chess there was a demand for structured material on strategy. A club player who wants to improve his chess, wants to know what he should look for.

The difference with a strong player is almost always a matter of orientation. The stronger player, as a rule, knows unerringly which features in a position play an important role and which do not. In this book we will study these various characteristic features of the middlegame deeply

### **1.3 Tactics and strategy**

If you open out a newspaper to read a soccer report, nowadays you encounter an increasing amount of jargon that is hardly understandable for an outsider. The language used when discussing tactical concepts seems directed to insiders only. Catchphrases like ‘positional play was sloppy’ or ‘the home side played with no less than eight players behind the ball, giving away too much space’, are of the order of the day. Also ‘the second ball was always for the away side’ will sound strange to the ear of an outsider. A non-soccer fan will at the very least scratch his head when reading such phrases...

The tactical concept plays an important role in sports in general, and in present-day soccer especially. Actually, for a chess player the term ‘tactical concept’ is misleading. With tactics we think of combinations. But when a soccer coach talks about tactics, he means the strategy he wants to pursue in order to outsmart his colleague in the dug-out. The coach’s brainwork – which ‘puppet’ is put in which place, and which assignment is given to the ‘puppet’ – is of a purely strategic nature in chess terminology. What is more, in chess we can also see the player himself as a kind of coach. For he is the one who determines which puppet goes where. Contrary to soccer, in chess the player has the undeniable advantage that while the battle is raging, he can make his men do exactly what he wants. The soccer coach must do most of his work before the game. During the game he can hardly exert any influence on the way in which his men carry out their assignments.

In the parallel I have drawn between soccer and chess, there is one essential similarity in the brainwork that has to be done. The (soccer) coach on one side and the chess player on the other, both have to possess a sound understanding of the game, which we can describe more specifically as ‘positional feeling’. Without positional feeling, good results can hardly be achieved in either discipline. We shall try to specify this term ‘positional feeling’ further, in order to see which variables are involved, and how we can exert influence on them. In the following I shall restrict myself to the game of chess. Not that I don’t have a clue about soccer. I am one of the sixteen million national coaches in Holland... Positional play is essentially about directing your pieces to the right squares. The question of what are the right squares, is not easy to answer. However, we can establish an elementary principle: the purpose of the game is to give mate, and so we will have to set up our pieces in such a way that mate is a logical consequence.

The experienced player will now shake his head pityingly: ‘No, we cannot paint such a simplified picture of the game.’ I will be the last to deny this, but sometimes it is good to return to the essence, in order to be able to see things in a different perspective.

For example, the advanced player cannot deny that the material superiority of one meagre pawn will sometimes suffice to convert a game into a win. If the opponent does not have compensation for this material disadvantage, the player will convert this pawn into a new queen, with which he will eventually be able to give mate.

## **1.4 Compensation**

Inadvertently, we have tracked down an important concept: compensation. And

with that we arrive at Wilhelm Steinitz, the first official World Champion, who laid the foundations for present-day strategy. In short, his theory amounts to the following.

According to Steinitz, the starting position is balanced. But every move must meet the demands of the position. If a player makes a mistake, he sins against a certain principle, and the balance will be tipped in favour of the opponent.

According to Steinitz, it is necessary to collect small positional advantages, which must be turned into other advantages. Steinitz labels the player who has obtained a certain advantage as ‘the attacker’. He claims that this player must try to convert this advantage into other advantages, until he has won the game. So he does not mean the ‘attacker’ in the classical sense of the word, but rather the player who has to do something with his positional advantage. It all amounts to the idea that if a player has to make a concession to a strategic principle, he must search for compensation for this in one way or another. If this compensation is lacking, then, according to Steinitz, even one single strategic advantage will be sufficient to tip the balance decisively

### **1.5 Steinitz’s Elements**

A positional assessment is formed by correctly pointing at the features of the position. Each position has various features, and the trick is to discover (or distinguish) what is important and what is not.

A strong player often has an excellent idea of the factors he should take notice of and which moves he must consider. Have you never been surprised at how quickly a simultaneous player makes his rounds? Usually he needs just a few seconds to familiarize himself with the position, and he will make the good moves rather automatically. In this book we will try to offer you guidelines with which you can find the characteristic features of a game as well. So, it is all a question of good orientation in order to find your way in apparently impenetrable jungles.

In his analyses, Wilhelm Steinitz, the first official World Champion, put a number of these features into words and formulated them into a kind of set of rules. Today his ‘formulae’ are still valid.

In doing this, Steinitz did groundbreaking work without actually knowing it. But to my knowledge, Steinitz never managed to make a logical list. One of his successors, Emanuel Lasker, realized the importance of the middlegame principles that Steinitz had discovered. With their help, he established a table, which he labelled ‘Steinitz’s Elements’ (see below). So Lasker gave his illustrious predecessor all the credit – and laid the foundation for present-day chess strategy!

## Steinitz's Elements

### *Permanent advantages*

1. Material advantage
2. Bad king position
3. Passed pawns in the middlegame
4. Weak pawns for the opponent
5. Strong and weak squares
6. Pawn islands
7. Strong pawn centre
8. Control of a diagonal
9. Control of a file
10. Bishop pair
11. Control of a rank

### *Temporary advantages*

12. Bad piece position
13. Inharmoniously placed pieces
14. Advantage in development
15. Concentration of pieces in the centre (centralization)
16. Space advantage

A few explanatory words may be of use here. In the above table, purely strategic features are considered. From practice, we know that in the game of chess, tactics often play first fiddle, but that does not mean that it is wrong to list all the possible strategic features. Actually, all possible features in a position can be more or less reduced to these elements.

If we are capable of dissecting a position into its strategic elements, then we automatically have the right orientation, and this should allow us to find the right plan in a game. In the former Soviet Union (and also in other Warsaw Pact countries), training was very much concentrated on the above-mentioned elements, and this may explain why (former) Soviet players are still so enormously strong. They are capable of 'reading' a position at one glance, because they track down the important features, dismiss the unimportant ones and choose the right path on that basis.

A second aspect connected with this table should be discussed. The term

‘permanent’ is used in a relative sense. If, for instance, a player possesses the bishop pair, in a number of cases he will abandon it at the right moment. To liquidate to an endgame that is winning for him, for example. Or to convert it into another advantage, like a surplus in material. From this we can conclude that a permanent advantage can also be quite temporary.

The ‘temporary advantages’ are of an even more transitory nature. A piece that is out of play can sometimes rejoin the battle within two moves, in which case this (temporary) advantage is only valid for two moves.

This book is organized in such a way that each theme is illustrated as aptly as possible, with model examples. Although the feature in question will be predominant in the game fragments, other features also play a role. For unveiling these secrets, I gladly offer you a new line of thinking that may be helpful to you. You will find it in Chapter 3.

## **1.6 Youth training**

As a trainer I have worked a lot with talented young players. One of my first pupils was the now well-known grandmaster Loek van Wely, with whom I have remained in contact. After a tournament with school children, his teacher at primary school drew my attention to his talent. I needed only 5 minutes to recognize that the then 10-year-old player possessed an innate talent for the game. Since he was geographically living in my neighbourhood, I was able to give him training on a frequent basis. Not that I was a well-grounded trainer at the time, but nonetheless I was able to give him a push in the right direction. Since his development went so fast, I soon referred him to a more experienced trainer (Cor van Wijgerden), who brought in some stronger players in no time. In any case, Van Wely has proved that he can hold his own with the top players of today, and that is worth something in Holland.

Besides giving – quite a few – group sessions, I have also started working in private training sessions, to work on a pupil’s game. Apart from improving their tactical decision-making abilities, we also polish their endgame technique. I also concentrate on the strategic aspect, mainly by analysing their own games. In order not to pour too much information into the heads of young players, I bring forward one or two aspects of their play, and we start to work on those by looking at examples. One of my hobbyhorses is play with a good knight versus a bad bishop. Two of my pupils managed to integrate this theme quickly into their game. The most striking example is a game that was played between two approximately 14-year-old players.



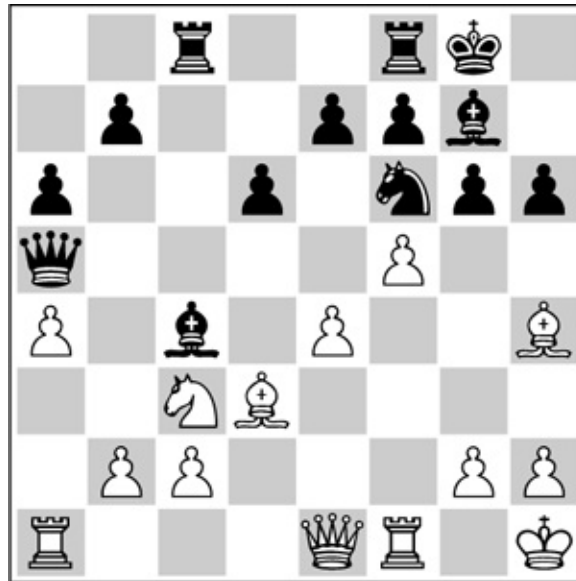
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☐ **Werle, Jan**

■ **Jianu, Vlad**

Cannes 1997 (8)

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be2 Bg7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Bg5 Nc6 9.Nb3 a6 10.a4 Be6 11.Kh1 Rc8 12.f4 Na5 13.Nxa5 Qxa5 14.Bd3 h6 15.Bh4 Bg4 16.Qe1 Be6 17.f5 Bc4**



**18.Nd5!**

The start of a liquidation with which White achieves a big positional advantage.

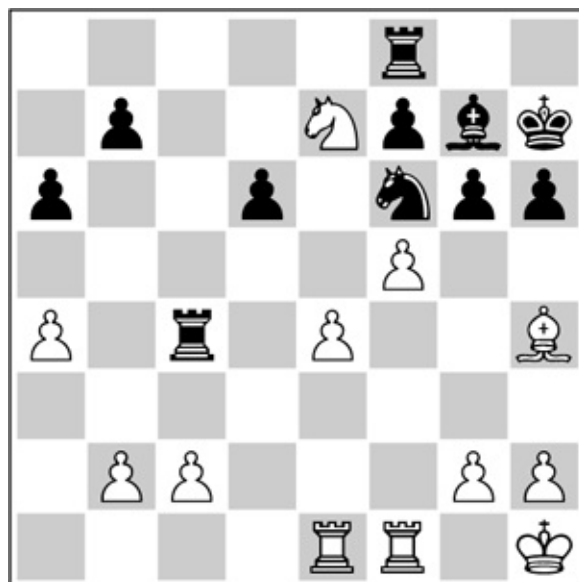
**18...Qxe1**

After 18...Qd8 19.Bxf6! Bxf6 20.fxg6 (less good is 20.Nxf6+, as Black has nothing to fear after 20...exf6 21.Bxc4 Rxc4) 20...fxg6 21.Qg3, White obtains a dangerous initiative. For example: 21...Kh7 22.e5!.

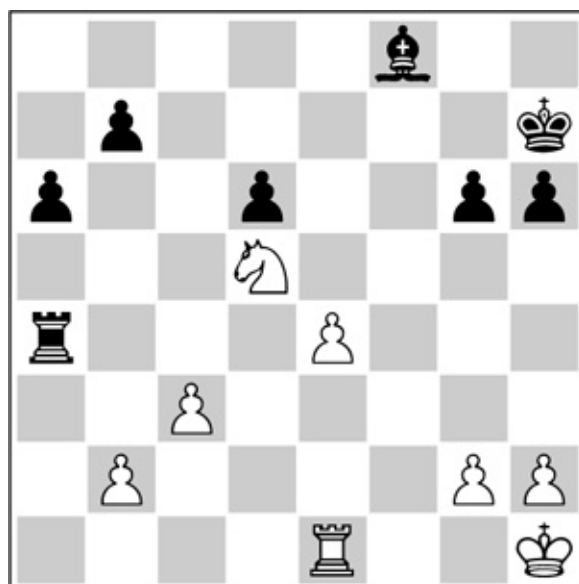
**19.Nxe7+ Kh7 20.Raxe1**

Probably, taking back with the other rook (20.Rfxe1) would have been better here, since after 20...Rc7 the position contains a tactical trick: 21.e5! and White takes control.

**20...Rc7 21.Bxc4 Rxc4**



**22.Bxf6! Bxf6 23.fxg6+ fxg6 24.Nd5 Bg7 25.Rxf8 Bxf8 26.c3 Rxa4**



At first sight White has achieved nothing. But appearances are deceptive!

**27.Kg1**

The king is activated. When it makes an appearance on the queenside, the extent of Black's problems will become clear.

**27...Bg7 28.Kf2 b5 29.Ke3 a5 30.Kd3 b4**

An attempt to free his rook, but Black saddles himself up with a quite weak pawn with this move. After the somewhat more tenacious 30...Be5, Black would eventually also experience problems with his rather boxed-in rook on a4.

**31.cxb4 axb4 32.Kc2 Bd4**

32...Ra2 33.Rb1 does not help either.

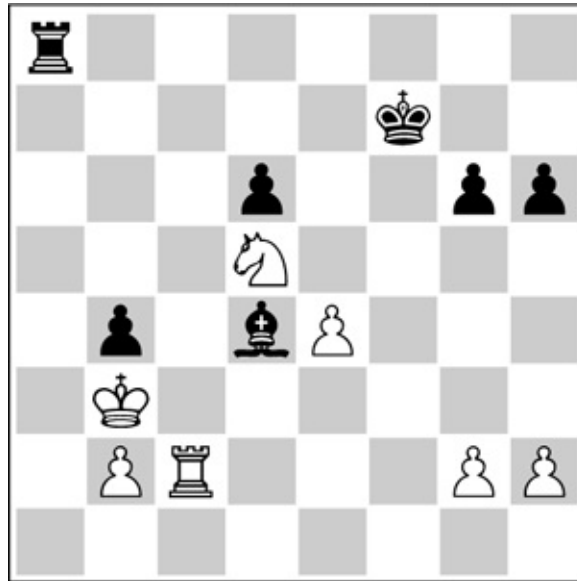
**33.Kb3 Ra8 34.Rc1**

The pawn on b4 is doomed, and White does not make haste to win it.

**34...Kg7 35.Rc2**

The intermediate move 35.Rc7+ was a little cleverer.

**35...Kf7**



**36.Nxb4**

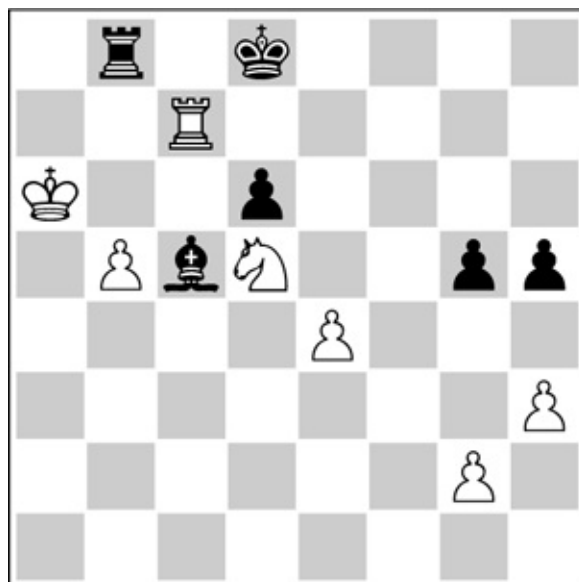
Thanks to his superior strategy White has won an important pawn, after which the rest is technique.

**36...Be5 37.h3 Ke6 38.Nd3 Rb8+ 39.Ka4 Bd4 40.b4!**

This pawn must do the job, and so it is pushed forward as quickly as possible.

**40...Rb6 41.b5 g5 42.Ka5 Rb7 43.Rc6 Kd7 44.Nb4 Rb8 45.Nd5 Bc5**

**46.Rc7+Kd8 47.Ka6 h5**



**48.e5 Ra8+ 49.Kb7 Ra7+ 50.Kc6 dxe5 51.Kxc5 Rxc7+ 52.Nxc7 1-0**

This game was played at the Junior World Championship in Cannes, 1997. I trained Jan Werle when he was a young lad. Now he has surpassed me on all fronts, since he has become a very good grandmaster. What more does a trainer want? By the way, in the area of strategy I didn't have to teach Jan a lot. He had his natural positional feeling, and his then trainer Babak Tondir had given him excellent support to develop it further.

The question seems justified how a 14-year-old could produce such an almost flawless strategic game. I hope to answer this question further on in this book.

The second game is by the then 12-year-old Benjamin Bok during the U-14 Dutch Junior Championships in 2007.

RL 7.4 (C60)

□ **Bok, Benjamin**

■ **Offringa, Joost**

Venlo jr 2007 (6)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 g6 4.0-0 Bg7 5.c3 a6 6.Ba4 d6 7.d4 Bd7**

In my training with Benjamin I had talked about good and bad bishops. With the help of positions arising from the French and the King's Indian I talked about the strategy to exchange your bad bishop for your opponent's good one. King's Indian players know that in the Main Line especially, Black's light-squared bishop is important in order to have a chance at success in the attack. With this

knowledge in the back of his head, Benjamin opts for a clear strategic concept, displaying a good understanding of what he is doing.



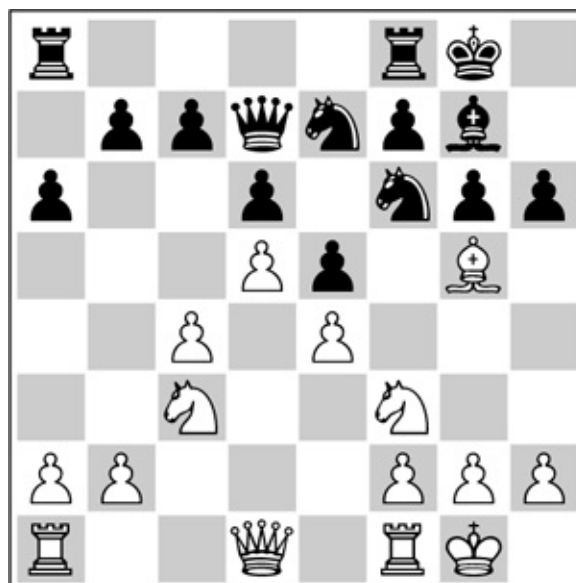
**8.d5 Nce7 9.Bxd7+ Qxd7 10.c4**

Thus, White has created a kind of King's Indian structure where he has already succeeded in exchanging the light-squared bishops.

**10...Nf6**

Now 10...f5 would not have been good in view of 11.Ng5!, and the knight occupies the unassailable square e6.

**11.Nc3 0-0 12.Bg5! h6**



**13.Bxf6**

This curious exchange is the consequence of White's previous move. White

gives his beautiful bishop for a knight. This theme had also been a subject during our training sessions. In chess, what matters is always which pieces remain on the board. In this case, in a closed position White possesses two knights against a knight and a bad bishop. That is a highly favourable material balance.

**13...Bxf6 14.b4**

The funny thing is that this position was still known from a game Zidarov-Delchev, Varna 1995. But Benjamin had invented it all by himself. The above-mentioned game continued as follows: 14.Qd3 Bg7 15.Nd2 f5 16.f3 h5 17.b4 Bh6 18.Nb3 Rf7 19.c5 Kh7 20.a4.

**14...b6 15.c5**

Very straightforwardly and effectively played. The base of Black's pawn chain must be attacked.

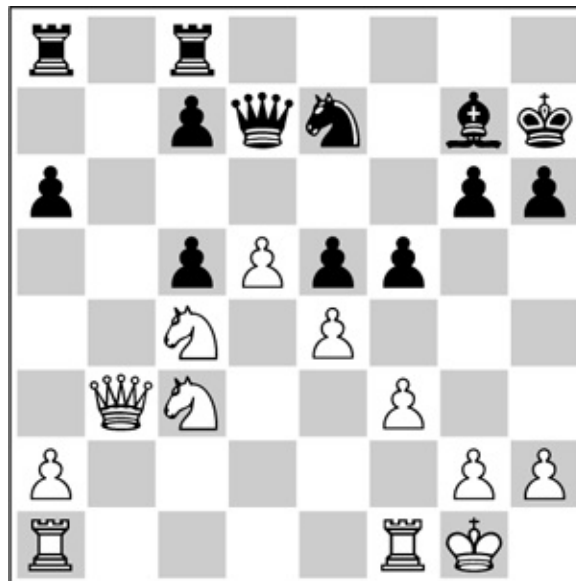
**15...Bg7**

15...bxc5 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.Na4 would give White a pleasant little plus.

**16.Nd2 f5 17.f3 Rfc8?!**

On this wing there is no employment for this rook. Probably Black had to capture twice on c5.

**18.Qb3 Kh7 19.Nc4 bxc5 20.bxc5 dxc5**



**21.Qa3?!**

White has a beautiful position, and he is also playing logical moves. With hindsight, 21.Na4! would have been much better, though. The knight is much better on c5 than the queen. After 21...Qb5 22.Qc2 the black queen will be driven off, after which White plays Nxc5, and he will invade on e6.

**21...Rcb8 22.Rab1 Nc8 23.Qxc5 Nd6**

Black has defended quite craftily.

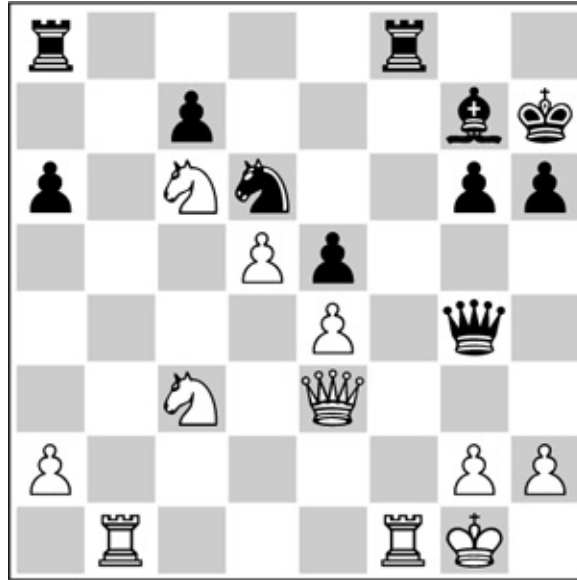


**24.Na5fxe4 25.fxe4 Rf8**

Black realizes his mistake and tries to transfer play to the kingside.

**26.Nc6**

The white knight has settled down on a beautiful square, but for the time being it does not have much to do there. White would have done better by confining Black's counterplay, since now the initiative passes on to the black player. Therefore, the prophylactic 26.h3 might have been more accurate.

**26...Qg4 27.Qe3****27...Rf4!**

Black is fighting back with all his might.

**28.h3 Qh4 29.Kh2 Qg5 30.Rf3**

The liquidation after 30.g3 Rxf1 31.Qxg5 Rxb1 would rather favour Black.

**30...Raf8 31.Rbf1 h5**

Another good move; the bishop will have a future on h6.

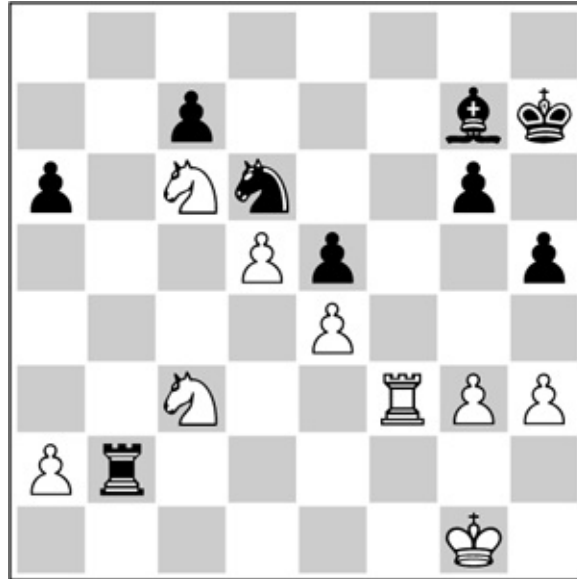
**32.g3?!**

Understandably, White wants to kick the annoying rook from f4, but this does not seem to be the right way. But White's position had already lost most of its lustre.

**32...Rxf3 33.Rxf3 Qxe3 34.Rxe3 Rf2+ 35.Kg1 Rb2**

It's a bit sad for White that the black rook has penetrated into his position, and that the 'bad' bishop will soon 'take a look inside'.

**36.Rf3**



**36...Kg8?!**

Black does not continue actively enough. There were two possibilities for him to keep the position balanced: with the tactical 36...Bh6!? 37.Nxe5 Bg7 38.Nd7 Bd4+ 39.Kf1 Bxc3 40.Rxc3 Nxe4 41.Rxc7 Kh6, Black breezes through to a draw. With 36...Rc2 he could have tied the white rook to the protection of the knight.

**37.Rf2!**

Well spotted. The rook must be driven off!

**37...Rb7 38.Re2 Nb5?!**

Black overplays his hand.

**39.Rb2!**

White would like to exchange rooks, as then he will end up in a favourable endgame of two good knights versus a passive black knight and a not-too-strong bishop.

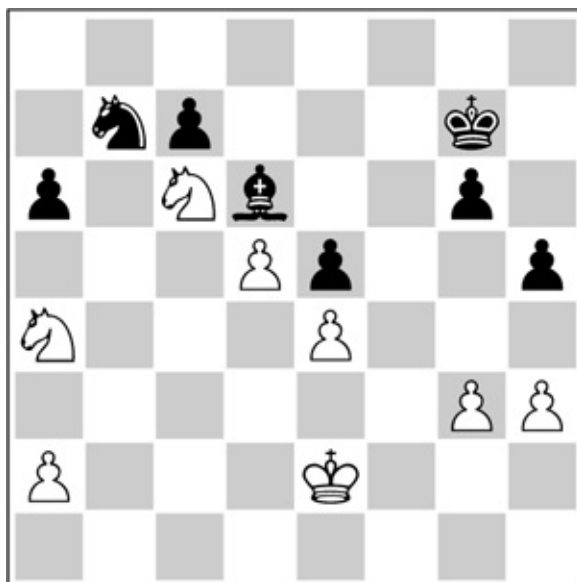
**39...Nd6 40.Rxb7 Nxb7 41.Kf2**

Slightly better was 41.Na4.

**41...Bf8**

41...Nc5 would have limited the damage.

**42.Ke2 Bd6 43.Na4 Kg7**



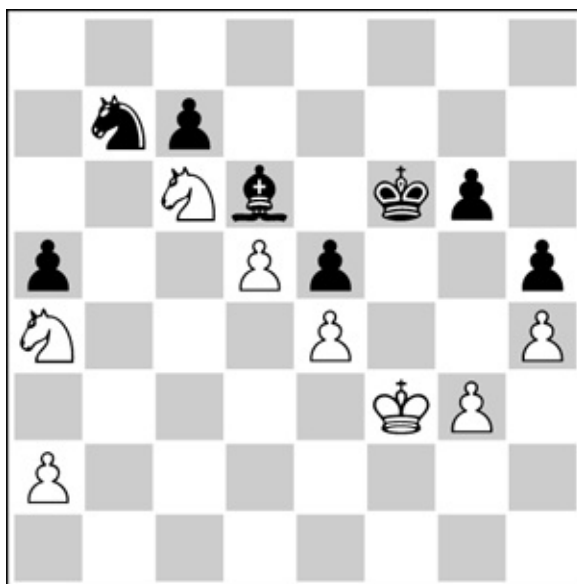
**44.Nb8!**

Excellently played: the pawn is forced to go to a square of the wrong colour, delivering more light squares into White's hands.

**44...a5 45.Nc6 Kf6 46.Kf3 Kg5 47.h4+!**

Very good!

**47...Kf6**



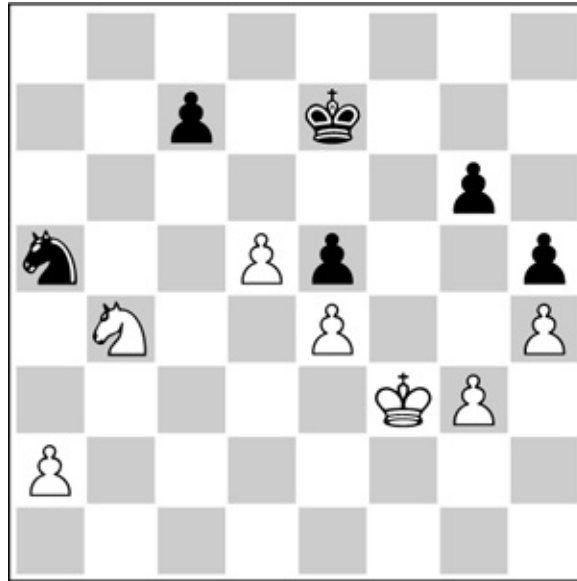
**48.Nb2!**

Zugzwang! Black cannot move a piece without losing a pawn.

**48...Bb4 49.Nxb4 axb4 50.Nd3 Na5 51.Nxb4**

An extra pawn in a knight ending can be valued almost like an extra pawn in a pawn ending.

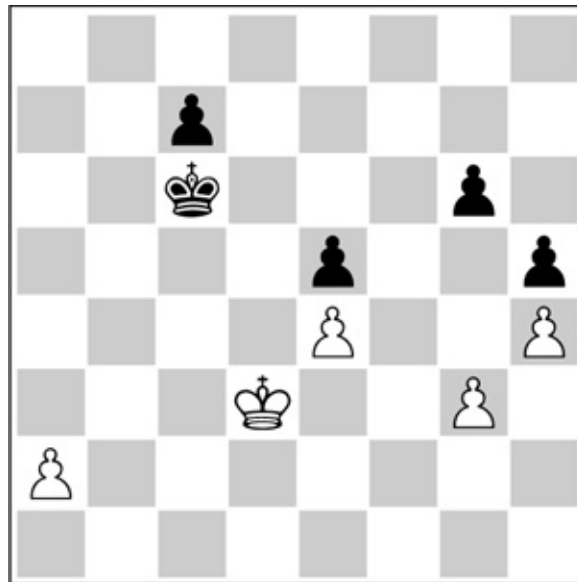
**51...Ke7**



**52.Nc6+!**

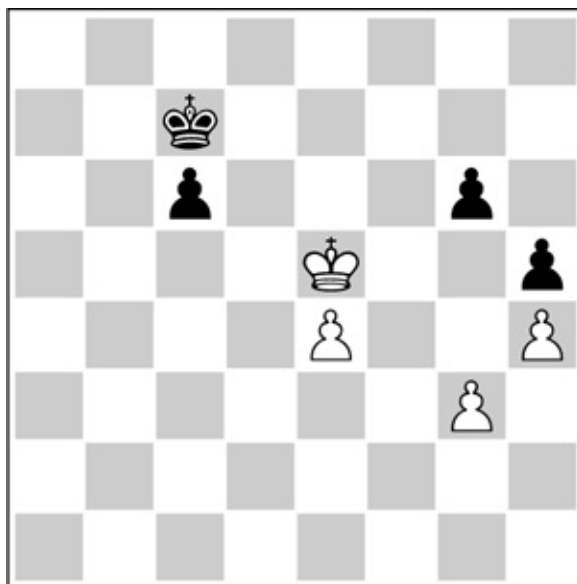
The white player liquidates into a pawn ending. He has seen sharply that this is winning for him. The move 52.Ke2!? is for lazy players: 52...Kd6 53.Kd3 Kc5 54.Kc3, and White also wins easily.

**52...Nxc6 53.dxc6 Kd6 54.Ke3 Kxc6 55.Kd3**



**55...Kb5**

The crucial variation goes: 55...Kc5 56.Kc3 Kb5 57.Kb3 Kc5 58.a4 Kd4 59.a5 Kc5 60.Ka4 c6 61.a6! Kb6 62.Kb4 Kxa6 63.Kc5 Kb7 64.Kd6 Kb6 65.Kxe5 and White wins, even though Black has the outside passed pawn. A possible follow-up is 65...Kc7



Analysis diagram

66.Ke6! and Black has no useful moves: 66...Kb6 (66...c5 67.Kd5) 67.e5 c5 68.Kd5 Kb5 69.e6, and White queens first. Afterwards it turned out that Bok had not calculated everything. That would have been well nigh impossible, but as so often his intuition did not deceive him, which is a sign of talent!

**56.Kc3 Ka4 57.Kc4**

The rest is elementary.

**57...Ka3 58.Kd5 Kxa2 59.Kxe5 Kb3 60.Kd5 Kb4 61.Kc6 Kc4 62.e5 1-0**

Also here, the young player succeeded in putting this positional principle into practice. Unfortunately, in one phase of the game he did not manage to maintain his advantage, but as soon as the opponent made a mistake somewhere, like a flash he steered the game with a steady hand to a win. His handling of the endgame was impressive.

## 1.7 Exercises

In this book, all strategic elements are discussed in separate chapters, and illustrated with examples. At the end of each chapter, where an element is discussed, you will find a number of exercises, allowing you to test whether the material has come across. In the other chapters there is an alternative way to dabble with 'the elements'.

A small warning is in order here. Many exercises are quite tough. When searching for the solutions to the problems in a position, there is no getting round having to show a certain amount of knowledge and understanding in order to be able to draw the right conclusions. The important thing is that you spot the

essence of the problem in the position and try to put this into words. This verbalization of the problems will help you reach a correct evaluation. And that is exactly how you will be able to improve your play!

If you have spotted the essential points in the exercises, you can be satisfied, because even for a grandmaster it will be impossible to foresee the entire range of events in a game. And if you don't manage to work it all out, there is always the possibility of playing over the games in the Solutions section in the back of this book.



## Chapter 2

# The eye of the grandmaster

### 2.1 Introduction

From the moment we learn the moves of the game, every chess player becomes acquainted with combinations.

What is a combination? If we consult the many manuals, we see a great variety in terminology. For instance, Igor Bondarevsky, in his book *Combinations in the Middlegame*, gives the following **definition**:

- ‘A combination is a forcing manoeuvre connected with a sacrifice.’

The notion of ‘forcing manoeuvre’ is also specified by Bondarevsky:

- ‘We speak of a forcing manoeuvre when the defender is forced to play moves that are imposed upon him.’

Bondarevsky does not elaborate upon the nature of these imposed moves. He does state that a combination mostly originates ‘on the basis of the specific features of the position’. The features that make the combination possible are also called ‘motifs’, which, according to Bondarevsky, lead to the eventual winning plan.

Another author with a great reputation was the Yugoslav Vladimir Vukovic. In his book *The Chess Sacrifice*, he has classified sacrificial motifs according to the so-called ‘effective elements’. What he means by the latter, he tries to illustrate with the help of an example:

In the middlegame, the pawn move e2-e4 is accompanied by a number of specific ‘effects’. Besides the well-known motives to play such a move (the diagonals d1-h5 and f1-a6 are opened, and at the same time the squares d5 and f5 are controlled), we can establish that this pawn now cannot protect the squares d3, f3, d4 and f4 anymore. Also, the square e2 is vacated and White has created space behind this pawn for his own pieces (suddenly Re1-e3 has become possible).

Finally, we can establish that the pawn on e4 has interrupted the diagonals b1-h7 and h1-a8, as well as the fourth rank. Especially these latter considerations can

be the harbinger of a combination idea.

Vukovic's view is interesting, but unfortunately in this book he falls back into some peculiar terminology, demonstrating, in my opinion, that he does not see the wood for the trees anymore. Thus, he uses several terms that to my mind are more confusing than constructive.

□ **Lasker,Emanuel**

■ **Euwe,Max**

Nottingham 1936 (13)



Black is a fraction better, as White has an isolated pawn on d4 and, as a consequence, a slightly worse bishop. After White's last move, 23.Ke2-d3, Black has to do something about his knight. Euwe made the ill-fated decision to start a counterattack:

**23...Ba5?? 24.b4!**

This move is called a 'placement sacrifice' by Vukovic. He writes: 'in order to prevent the loss of a piece, Black must accept the placement sacrifice':

**24...Bxb4 25.Nc2**

Vukovic: 'Now the bishop placed on b4 is attacked by the knight, which is removed from e1, and so a double attack on bishop and knight is created, causing Black to lose a piece. Ergo: placement, removal and double attack in a combination of not more than two moves.'

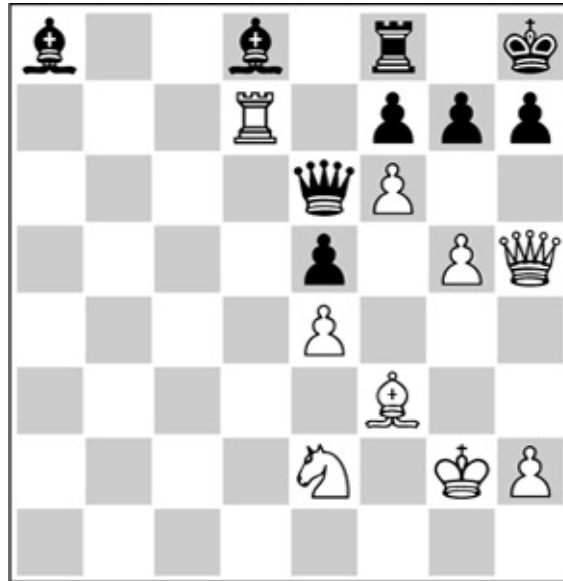
I would have written that White wins a piece with an intermediate move. Euwe

resigned a few moves later.

☐ **Kopaev, Nikolay**

■ **Alatortsev, Vladimir**

Leningrad 1938 (13)



With the name he attaches to the following combination, as well as his explanations, Vukovic merely creates a curtain of fog, where he should have provided clarity. Thus he writes about ‘breaking a pawn blockade’, and his explanation is as follows: ‘The removal of a pawn blockade is a singular effective element, even though it only occurs in cooperation with other elements. Thus, the blocked pawn can be liberated by diverting the blockader, or when an enemy piece ends up within a pawn’s field of fire by means of placement.’ Can you follow this?

By the way, the combination itself is very pretty:

**32.g6!**

White simply threatens to give mate.

**32...h6**

Now 32...fxg6 is not possible in view of 33.fxg7+ Kg8, and now the beautiful queen sacrifice 34.Qxh7+! Kxh7 results in an even more beautiful minor promotion: 35. gxf8N+.

**33.Qxh6+!**

With another queen sacrifice White works his way towards the enemy king.

**33...gxh6**

The rest is forced:

**34.g7+ Kg8 35.gxf8Q+ Kxf8 36.Rxd8+ Qe8 37.Rxe8+ Kxe8**

And the endgame is a simple win.

Coined terms should rather bring clarity. With the terminology used in the above examples, the chess student is confronted with riddles. Of course, it is not my intention to launch an attack on Vukovic's work. The man has written a nice book with beautiful examples of combinations. But I do not think we can speak of a well-thought-out system here.

A much more logical and profound, but also didactically sound build-up we can see in the Step-by-Step Method, which is very commonly used in The Netherlands. In our country we may count ourselves lucky to have this great teaching method that IM Cor van Wijgerden and Rob Brunia have developed together.

Van Wijgerden used to be a schoolteacher by profession. At the chess board he achieved the title of International Master, and soon he started to occupy himself with chess training. Before long, he became the national coach of the Dutch chess federation. Rob Brunia was a pedagogue who also had a wide psychological background. He was attached to an institute for highly gifted children. Unfortunately, he died at a relatively young age.

Both pioneers worked for a long time on a didactically well-founded teaching plan, where tactics are central. But also in other areas, for instance strategy and endgame technique, the fundamentals are treated, and they are elaborated upon in the higher Steps. Without effort, one can become proficient in all of the areas and, in this way, pick up all kinds of skills. The authors have written an introduction that is much closer to practice than is the case in most manuals. The terminology is also better suited to the nature of the themes. Besides the handbooks of instruction (written especially for trainers), they have compiled several workbooks, with exercises classified by theme and level. A chess fan can climb from the level of beginner to strong club player. For more information you can surf to [www.stappenmethode.nl](http://www.stappenmethode.nl).

It is not without justification that a lot has already been written about the different combinational motifs our game offers. Statistics teach us that around 70-80% of all chess games are decided with a combination. People talk about exploiting tactical possibilities offered by the position. The discovery of a combination I would like to describe as a 'random picture' in a game, where one of the players is offered the possibility to decide the game in his favour with a

combinational motif



Virtually every experienced club player will look at the following exchange sacrifice.

**1.Rxf6! gxf6**

Black has to take back, otherwise he will just be a piece down.

**2.Qg3+**

This check is, of course, the logical follow-up, since the black king is starting to feel the ‘draught’.

**2...Kf8**

Only now does the real motif appear. White wins the queen with a discovered check:

**3.Ng6+ hxg6 4.Qxc7**

**1-0**

The first moves of the combination are self-evident – only at the end the actual motif has to be discovered. The reason that Black loses is because his queen is unprotected. Since White can play his queen to g3 with tempo, he sets up a battery. The trouble for Black is that his king must move to a fatal square (f8 or h8), after which the knight can give a winning discovered check. It is clear that this type of theme can play a role in every game.

In fact, we could claim that a ‘silly coincidence’ (the fact that the queen is unprotected and that due to Whites check the black king must move to a square where it falls victim to a discovered check) is Black’s undoing.



What strikes us in this position is the bad position of the black knight on a5. But at first sight, White cannot immediately take profit from that.

### **1.Nxf5**

With two preparatory moves White introduces a simple motif with which he wins a piece. Instead, 1.Qa4 wouldn't yield much after 1...b6.

### **1...Rxf5 2.h4!**

A strong intermediate move that removes all possible counter play from the position. Here, 2.Qc2 would also win material, but then Black can struggle on with 2...Nf3+ 3.Bxf3 Rxf3 4.b4 Qd7.

### **2...Nf7 3.Qc2**

This is another preparatory move for the decisive motif. The pawn on c4 is protected with gain of tempo, thereby depriving the knight of its escape square.

### **3...Rf6 4.b4**

And so the curtain falls: in the end the knight is trapped, after White has carefully paved the way.

The resemblance between these two positions is that the white player weaved the motif in question in the position only after two preparatory moves. In the first case, a discovered check was the point; in the second, a piece was surrounded. Labelling such preparatory moves is a discovery in the terminology of the Step-by-Step Method.

There are players who build such jokes into their game all the time, and some of them are successful with it as well. They are called tacticians.

## **2.2 The tactician is opposed by the strategist**

Another type of player is he who takes a long-term view of the game. His play is based on pawn structures, finding strong squares, and besieging weak pawns. He makes plans that are in accordance with the strategic demands of the position.

Such a player is called a strategist.

Compared to tactics, not much has been written about chess strategy yet. Of course, the past has known several great players who have formulated positional laws. But the accessibility of these regularities is much less concrete than in the case of combinations. A long-term plan can be thwarted at every move. At first sight there seems to be no such thing as ‘forcing manoeuvres’ that lead by force to a concrete advantage.

And yet, pursuing a plan that is in accordance with the demands of the position is absolutely necessary to achieve better results in games.

When we are building up a game, we are fairly quickly confronted with the question ‘How to continue?’. Or rather: ‘To what should I pay attention, what are the features of the position, and what should I aim for in the future?’. From the above we can gather that strategy and tactics are in constant conflict with each other. For example, a strategically beautiful set-up can be spoilt by an ‘accidental combination’ at any moment. But it is also true that a well-built-up game in most cases needs to be crowned with a tactical turn. In practice it has turned out that many players find it difficult to combine long-term play with a timely discovery of tactical finesses. Only the strongest players manage to find a kind of balance between these two components of the game.

Let’s take a close look at the following fragment.

□ **Fischer, Robert**

■ **Gadia, Olicio**

Mar del Plata 1960 (3)



Fischer wrote: ‘This is the kind of position I get in my dreams’. A first glance at the position shows that White has a firm grip on the position. Let’s see if we can sum up the specific features:

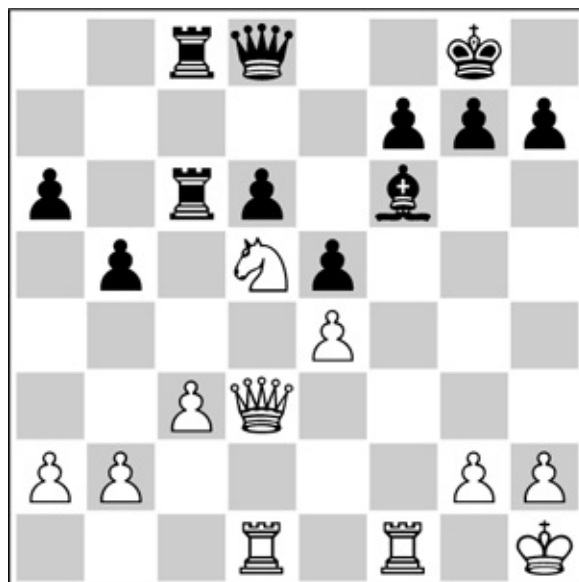
- White has a strong knight versus a weak bishop for Black;
- This is thanks to the strong central square d5, which has been irreparably weakened by Black;
- White has slightly more space on the kingside, mainly because of the far advanced pawn on f5, and he can play for an attack on the king ;
- The white pieces are well centralized and more active than their black colleagues;
- Black has a little more space on the queenside thanks to the advance ... b7-b5.
- Black hopes to activate his rook on the c-file, either via pressure on the e4 pawn, or by pushing ...b5-b4, in order, after c3xb4, to penetrate on c2 with one of the rooks.

## 21.Ra1!!

A formidable move, which is a sign of great strategic understanding. For the purpose of this book, it is unfortunate that the alternative also gives White an advantage.

I asked many (experienced) players, when showing them this position, how White could best continue on the basis of the above-mentioned features. Not surprisingly, many of them suggested to continue with 21.f6!, which is also more in the line of expectation than Fischer’s choice. How many people – not to mention computer programs – wouldn’t be inclined to start with this attractive move? Indeed, the black king position is torn apart after 21...Bxf6.

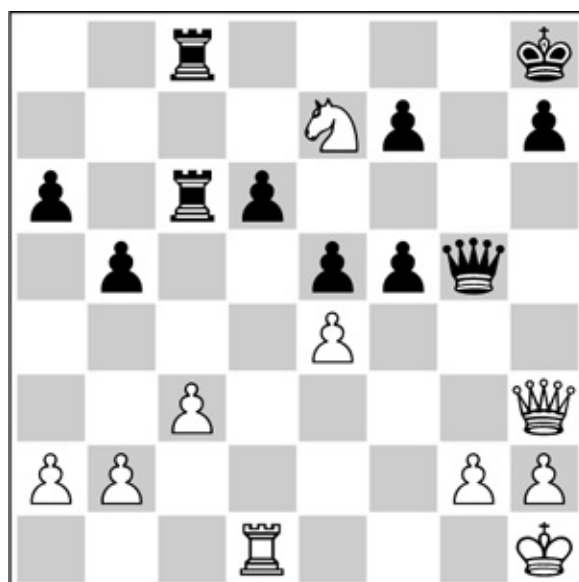




Analysis diagram

A) 22.Rxf6?!. There will always be ‘lunatics’ who are even prepared to sacrifice the rook for the bad bishop; however, this does not yield the intended result: 22...gxf6 and now:

A1) 23.Qg3+?! Kh8 24.Qh4 Qg8 25.Ne7 (the faulty attacking attempt 25.Nxf6?! certainly does not yield White any advantage: 25...Qg6 26.Rd3 d5! ♖, and Black has defended himself successfully) 25...Qg5 26.Qh3f5!?.

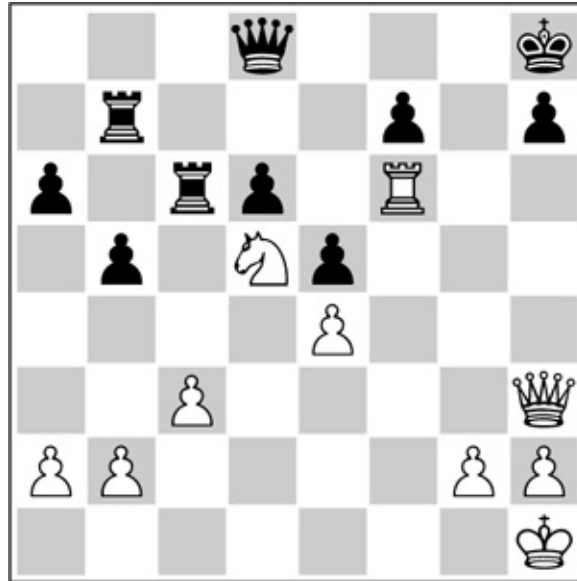


Analysis diagram

And also here Black does not have any problems;

A2) 23.RA Kh8 24.Rxf6 (24.Nxf6 Qf8!) 24...R8c7 25.Qh3 (25.Nxc7?? Qxf6-

+) 25...Rb7.



Analysis diagram

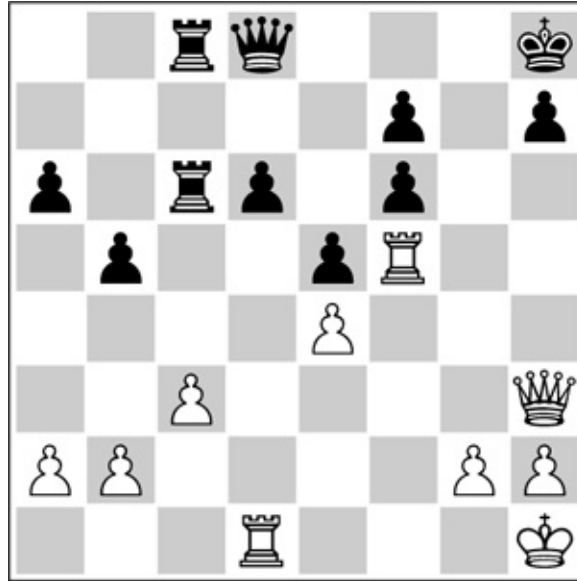
Even though White has the better chances here, the question is if he can make anything substantial out of it.

B) 22.Nxf6 gxf6. Closer analysis teaches us that Black's weakened king position does not yet guarantee White an easy win here.

One should realize that after 21.f6!?, Black has been relieved of a great problem in his position in one single blow: his bad bishop. In many variations Black is not without counterplay. A small summary:

B1) After 23.Rf5, Black looks for counterplay with 23...b4!? 24.cxb4 (also after 24.Qg3+ Kh8 25.Qh4 bxc3 26.Rh5 Qg8 there is nothing concrete to play for) 24...Rc1 25.Rff1 Rxd1 26.Rxd1 Rc6, and even though White keeps the better chances, the question is if he can convert these into a win;

B2) 23.Qh3! (an improvement) 23...Kh8 (23...Qe7 seems worse: 24.Rd3 Kh8 25.Rg3 Rg8 26.Rxg8+ Kxg8 27.Qh6, and White maintains winning chances) 24.Rf3 (or 24.Rf5



Analysis diagram

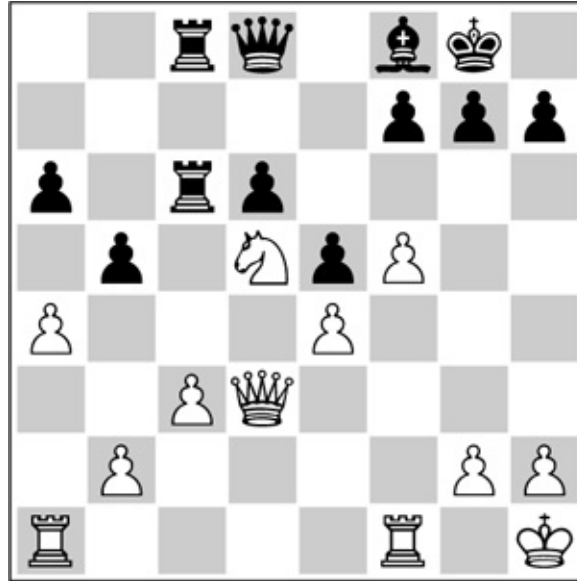
24...Rc4!, with counterplay) 24...Qe7 25.Rdf1. Here also, we have to rate White's chances higher, but a direct decision is certainly not on the cards. If we formulate this in words, we can conclude that after 21.f6 Bxf6 and now both 22.Nxf6+ and 22.Rxf6, Black must try to fight off an annoying white initiative, but he has quite a lot of defensive resources at his disposal.

The actual course of the game was quite different!

Let's return to the diagram position, as Fischers first move may have come as a surprise to you. After 21.Ra1!!, he threatens to open the a-file with 22.a4 and to invade with his rook(s). In the game Black still feared the threat of 22.f6, and so he tried the ugly move

**21...f6?!**

But also after the better 21...Bf8 his fate would have been sealed. White continues with 22.a4.



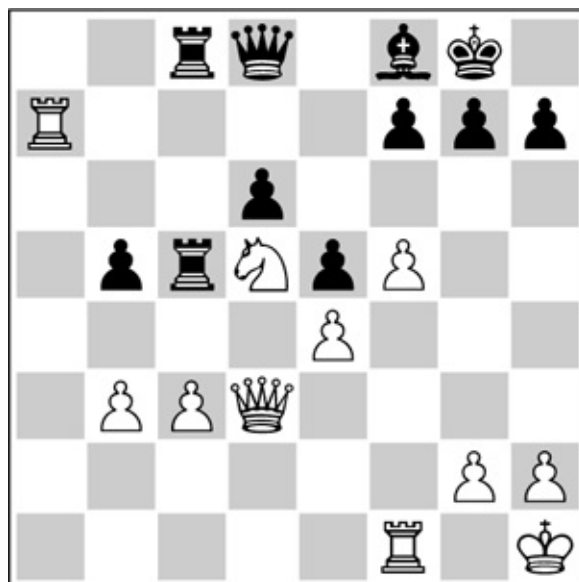
Analysis diagram

And now there are three possibilities:

A) 22...Rb8 23.Nb4 Rcb6 24.a5 R6b7, and here White can choose from various good moves: 25.Nxa6, winning a pawn, and 25.Nc6, winning an exchange, catch the eye;

B) 22...bxa4 23.Rxa4 Ra8 (also after 23...a5, White will be pulling the strings. After 24.Rfa1 Rc5 (24...Ra8? 25.b4), both 25.Qa6 and 25.h3 are promising for White. With his superior knight on d5 he will often be able to push forward his b-pawn undisturbed, since Black doesn't have a shred of counterplay), and now both 24.Rfa1, 24.b4 and 24.f6 g6, and then the two possibilities mentioned above, are decisive. The pawn on a6 cannot be defended, after which White's b-pawn decides the game in his favour;

C) 22...Rc4. Probably the best move. White will also have to allow a slight weakening in order to carry his plan through: 23.b3 R4c5 24.axb5 axb5 25.Ra7.

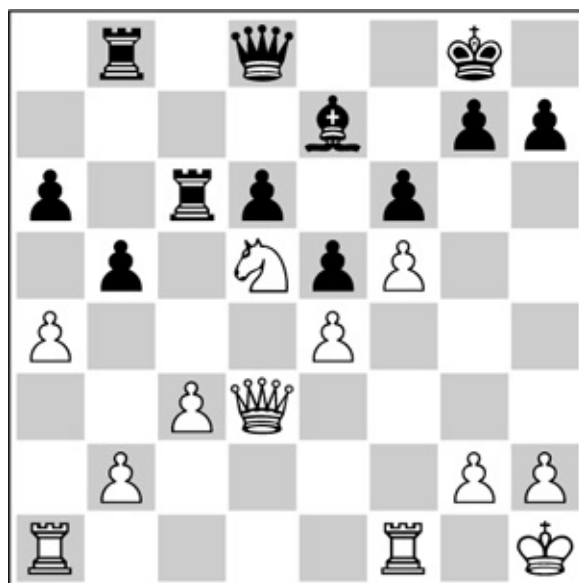


Analysis diagram

White has a firm grip on the position here. He can increase the pressure with 26.Rfa1, or the cunning 26.f6!?.

**22.a4 Rb8??**

With this weak reply White is handed the full point on a silver platter.



**23.Nxe7+**

Black resigned in view of 23...Qxe7 24.Qd5+ followed by 25.Qxc6, winning a rook.

This is a nice example of the ‘random picture’ I mentioned earlier. After Black’s blunder, the position suddenly contains a tactical motif so now White does

exchange his good knight for the bad bishop. This earns him a full rook.

What was the secret of Fischer's solution?

From the diagram position White achieves an easy win because he knows how to exploit the advantage of his good knight against the bad bishop. Or rather: White makes use of the knight on the queenside, where the bishop cannot intervene, and therefore, as it were, Black plays with a piece less on that wing.

An essential factor with all this was the target constituted by the pawn on b5.

This allowed White to stage a quick operation via the a-file. Had the pawn been on b7, then it would not have been so easy for White to make progress on the queenside, although he could also then have worked with the push a2-a4-a5 followed by Rd1-a1-a4-b4-b6.

So, the peculiarity of this position is that the 'logical' 1.f6 is not in conformity with the features of the position, whereas after the 'mysterious' 1.Ra1!!, White gets a grip on the position in a simple way, and Black can do nothing about it. With this example I hope to have afforded a glance behind the scenes. One might ask: what is logic? Everything depends on the ability to assess a position correctly by evaluating the features in the right way. In the above-mentioned example it wasn't his opponent's weakened king position that White depended on, but the target offered to him by the b5 pawn. Thus, he was able to transfer the battlefield to the queenside, underlining the advantage of the strong knight on d5 versus Black's bad bishop.

We have now discovered that it is important to collect a number of positional advantages in a game, which then have to be converted into concrete advantages.

## **2.3 What makes a master?**

'The term 'master' has more or less gone out of fashion as an epithet for someone who has attained a high, generally recognized, degree of competence in a special trade or field.'

These words can be read in Prof. Adriaan de Groot's famous thesis entitled *Thought and Choice in Chess*, published in 1946 (first English edition in 1965).

De Groot hastily adds: 'In chess, the term has retained its full impact: the concept still has real meaning.'

He also showed vision when he wrote: 'True, also here the official regulations regarding the attainment of a master title have become diluted and the boundaries of mastership have faded, but still the concept has maintained a genuine meaning.'

De Groot was quite prophetic when, at the time when FIDE was still in its infancy, he already predicted the title inflation that has taken place in the past decades.

After a quite extensive plea he concludes that mastership is demonstrable: 'Having fecund experience, as distinct from encyclopedic knowledge, this forms the nucleus of mastership'.

The thesis *Thought and Choice in Chess* is still regarded as a groundbreaking work in cognitive psychology. For example, De Groot served up positions to stronger and weaker players and asked them to express their train of thought. He summarized this train of thought, which was described in as much detail as possible, in protocols, which he was later able to use for the formulation of so-called 'chess thinking'.

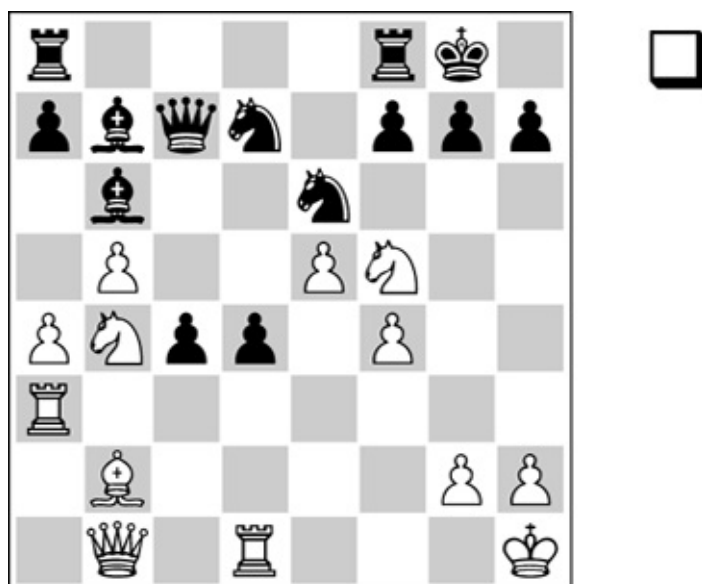
The striking thing about this research is that De Groot discovered that strong players do not mainly derive their playing strength from their ability to calculate quickly and accurately. The difference lies mainly in the way a strong player knows how to assess a position. Within a few seconds, he succeeds in finding the right orientation, and as a consequence, he will find the best move in many cases.

It wasn't until 1996 that a second important book appeared in the same research area. This book, entitled *Perception and Memory in Chess*, was written by De Groot in cooperation with the Swiss psychologist and chess player Fernand Gobet. The nice thing was that this book gratefully made use of an experiment that had been set up by the Dutchman Riekent Jongman, one of De Groot's students. In this experiment) which resulted in the thesis *The Eye of the Master*, Jongman developed a unique set of spectacles. On these spectacles, a camera and a light were mounted, which followed the eye movements of the wearer. Now various players were asked to look at certain positions, and the researchers tried to follow the eye movements. Jongman demonstrated that you can measure true playing strength by having a test subject look at a position for a few seconds (see the picture below).



**The eye movements of the Hungarian grandmaster Andras Adorjan are being registered. On the other side of the board sits grandmaster Helmut Pfleger.**

Gobet's merit was that he wrote a computer program with which eye movements could be simulated. How a strong player orientates on a position is best illustrated with an example that I have devised myself for this occasion.



The above position is characteristic for this experiment. At first sight, the position looks messy. The pieces are scattered seemingly randomly all over the board and it's no easy task to discover any harmony in this chaos. A weaker player mostly doesn't know which factors he should pay attention to.



His eyes travel all over the board, he looks at the white knights on b4 and f5, and after some time the light will be pointed at the d6-square.

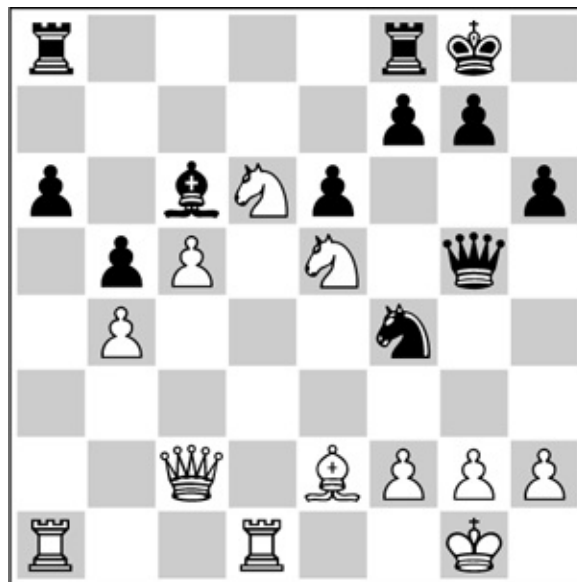
A stronger player immediately sees that White can give check on e7 with his knight. Of what value this is to him, or also the value of the move Ra3-h3 that will very probably enter his field of vision, is not immediately clear. A grandmaster who is given this position to study will undoubtedly need a few seconds to find the winning combination. The light flashes quick as lightning to and fro between the white knight on f5, the rook on a3 and the queen on b1, and then he plays almost a tempo:

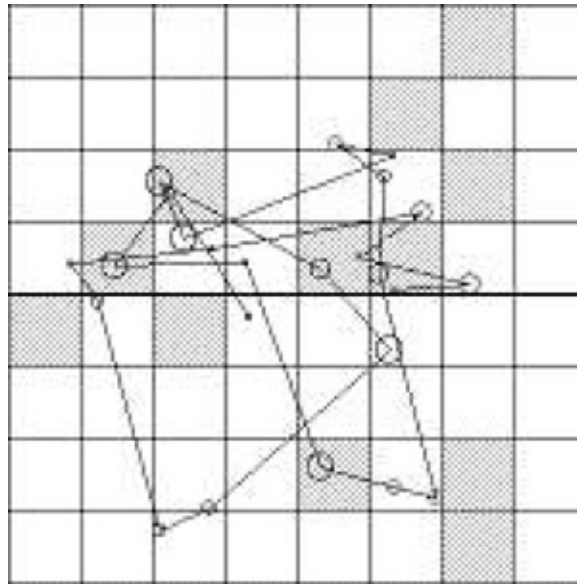
**1.Ne7+ Kh8 2.Qxh7+! Kxh7 3.Rh3# 1-0**

This is not a very difficult combination, experienced players will say, and they would be right. But the difficulty lies in recognizing what is important and what isn't. How does the grandmaster know in only a few seconds that a winning combination is available?

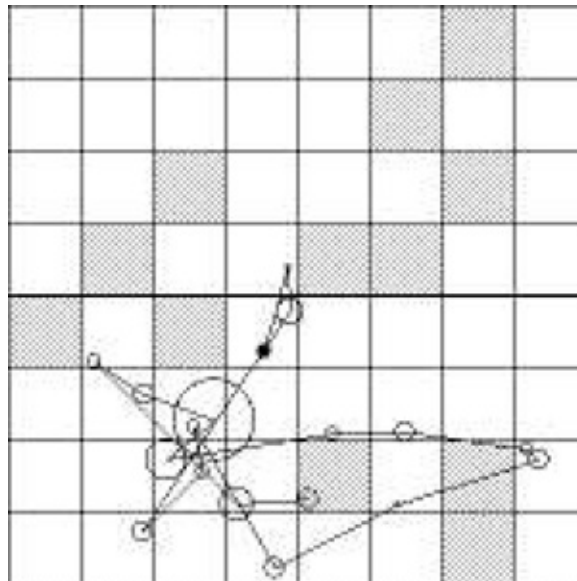
How does he so quickly reach the conclusion that only the three above-mentioned pieces are of importance in this position? How can he so quickly select the moves that he has to play?

**Example of eye movements (time of presentation = 5 seconds)**





### Eye movements of a (grand)master



### Eye movements of a beginner

The answer is that with his experienced eye, the grandmaster recognizes patterns at great speed. The mate motif with the knight on e7, the enemy king on h7, a black pawn on g7 and a rook on h3, he has seen all this before.

Also with more difficult combinations, this pattern recognition turns out to be the trick of the trade. Many manuals on learning tactical motifs go at length into this pattern recognition.

The big question that will be central to this book, is if a similar pattern

recognition also exists with regard to strategic factors.

The answer is a straightforward 'yes'. Many stronger players will try to express their predominance in quiet, positional positions, or in endgames, where deeper understanding must decide the issue.

During the famous AVRO tournament that was held in various cities all over the Netherlands in 1938, Professor De Groot conducted an interesting experiment. He invited various players to study different chess positions and to think 'Out loud' at the same time. The results of these thought processes were laid down in protocols that were painstakingly researched by De Groot after the event.



With this isolated pawn-position taken from a game Lasker-Capablanca, the difference between master and amateur could immediately be observed. The chess fans wrote down normal moves like 1.Rfe1, 1.Bh6, 1.Bb1 or 1.h4. They spent around twenty minutes on this on average. The grandmasters Alekhine, Keres, Fine and Euwe were much more in agreement concerning the direction in which their thoughts should develop. They evaluated the position as almost winning for White after the strong, but hardly obligatory exchange 1.Ba2xd5!!.

Alekhine developed a verbal analysis in around 9 minutes which went approximately as follows :

'1.Bxd5!. Now 1...Bxd5 is not good, therefore 1...exd5. There can follow 2.Ng4, 2.Re1, or 2.Nxc6 and 3.Re1, or perhaps 2.Qf3. The move 1.Bxd5 is certainly tempting...

1.Ng4 must be considered, but it doesn't look good.

1.Nxd5, and then perhaps 1...Nxd5 2.Bxd5 Bxg5, with numerous, but not very convincing, possibilities.

1.Nxc6. At first sight there follows 1...bxc6, which reinforces Black's d5 square. A pity. But at any event, White stands better. I would be happy to have such a position in a tournament.

Are there any forcing moves, besides 1.Bxd5? It looks very strong. Let's compare: 1.Nxc6 bxc6: pressure on c6, bishop pair, it's very pleasant, but the position demands more. Let's check 1.Bxd5 again.'

This thought protocol gave me the idea to 'harass' youth players that I trained with it. I wrote this position on a card for the 11- or 12-year-old Loek van Wely (who later became six-time Dutch champion) to work with at home. I asked him to write down in words and variations what he was thinking about and also to write down the time it took him. At the next training session he showed me what he had written on the card: 'I see that White has pressure on the knight on f6 and that he can increase the pressure on f7. I see that I can chase away the rook from f8 and then he has problems protecting f7.'

Next, we could conclude that Loek had also managed to produce the correct move 1.Bxd5. He had also managed to find the strong follow-up 2.Qf3! after 1...exd5. So here there was grandmaster vision at an early stage! He indicated that he had thought for a total of 30 minutes to find these variations:

### **1.Bxd5!!**

1.Rfe1; 1.Bh6; 1.Bb1; 1.h4; 1.Ng4; 1.Nxd5 Nxd5 2.Bxd5 Bxg5; 1.Nxc6 bxc6.

### **1...exd5**

1...Bxd5 2.Bxf6 Bxf6 3.Nd7.



### **2.Qf3!**

2.Ng4 Alekhine; 2.Rfe1 Alekhine; 2.Nxc6 Alekhine.

2...Qd8 3.Rfe1 Kg7 4.Ng4 Nxg4 5.Bxe7 Qd7 6.Bxf8+ Rxf8 7.Qf4

And White won.

Playing through games where there is a big difference between the two players, you often see that the stronger player gives the position a technical character, hoping that the opponent will at one point sin against one (or more) of the strategic principles.

On his website *The Max Pam Globe*, the well-known Dutch chess journalist Max Pam summarizes beautifully what De Groot's merit was exactly:

'De Groot discovered that chess players actually do not think. He exposed the myth of the genius who calculates dozens of moves. A chess player doesn't think, but he does see clusters on the board, which are registered already at first glance. Strong players, as emerges from the experiment, realize within one second which strategies belong to which clusters. They know and see more than they think. This discovery was of great importance for Gestalt psychology'. And that is exactly what this book is about. The central question is how club players can try to learn to think like a master. As a stepping-stone we have taken Steinitz's Table of Elements.

## Chapter 3

# Thought process and line of thinking

### 3.1 What is the plan?

You don't learn to play chess in five minutes. And you will not understand the game within one week. This may be an unpleasant observation for a player who is hoping to increase his playing strength without much effort. But you will not be discouraged that quickly, will you?

It is not easy to prepare for a game. How will you go about it? Where do you start? Which book will you take up? Which computer program will you use for support? And how will you mentally arm yourself for the battle ahead? Let's look at a small strategic test first.



Have you found a plan? And have you written down the move that you would play? We will return to this in the next section.

### 3.2 The key to success

There are no two ways about this. Making the right assessment and building up a reasoning which is founded on logic – this is the key to success. First we have to discover which factors are of importance and which aren't. Only after that will we be able to choose the correct plan. And then, accurate calculation will still be necessary. All in all, no simple task.

Working as a chess trainer, I have seen many interesting chess books. An awful lot are being published on opening variations, but the middlegame and endgame don't come off badly either. Since I am especially interested in the middlegame and the endgame, I have acquired various books on these subjects that are known as standard works. What struck me is the great amount of books that are written about tactics. And rightly so, since we may assume that, especially at a somewhat lower level, most of the games are decided with a tactic. Spotting tactical tricks is, to a certain extent, a talent, but it can be learned quite quickly and effectively.

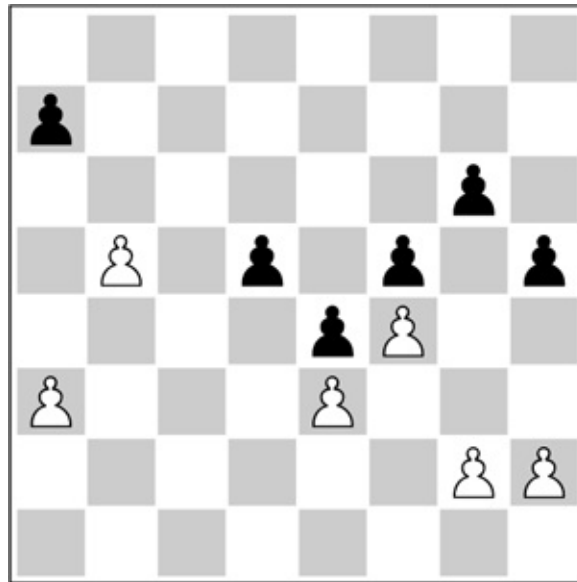
We have established before that tactics and strategy hold together, as it were. With tactics, a combination is a 'random picture' in the game. For example, a piece is unprotected and this can immediately be exploited. Strategy means longer-term thinking. Where should I put my pieces, what future has my knight, and how safe is my king? These are stereotypical questions that occupy us when we are playing with long-term plans.

Back to chess literature. Many attempts have been made to shed light on the various aspects of strategy, but rarely have I seen anything that looked like a well-founded system. I myself find the approach by the Russian grandmaster Alexander Kotov in his book *Play like a Grandmaster* very interesting.

In another book, *Train like a Grandmaster*, Kotov describes how the former Soviet School was based on the approach that he elaborates upon in *Play like a Grandmaster*. He demonstrates that you cannot make assessments in the middlegame unless you know which features you have to look out for.

In the first part of this book, much attention is paid to the importance of pawn structures. The first unofficial World Champion, François Philidor, already told us that 'the pawns are the soul of chess'. Not only because pawns can fulfil an active role, but also because the pawn structure gives us information about the manoeuvres that we must plan. If we want to know where our pieces should go, we can largely read this from the pawn structure.

A well-known method to find the right plan mentally is to remove the pieces from the board and look for the right set-up of the pieces by looking at the pawn formation. We apply this method with the help of the diagram with which we started this chapter.

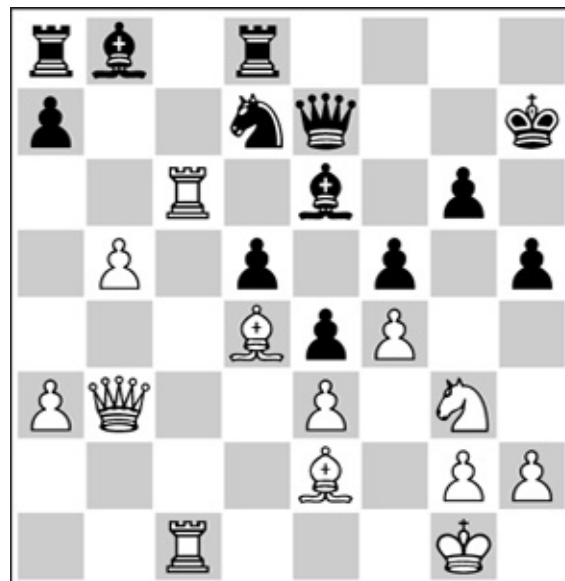


Position without pieces

□ **Piket, Jeroen**

■ **Van Baarle, John**

Amsterdam 1984 (9)



If we now take another look at the set-up of the pieces, we see that most white pieces are actively placed. One of his pieces is doing absolutely nothing for the moment: the knight. It is a golden rule to make all your pieces participate in the game.

On the basis of the pawn structure, we see that d4 and g5 are beautiful squares



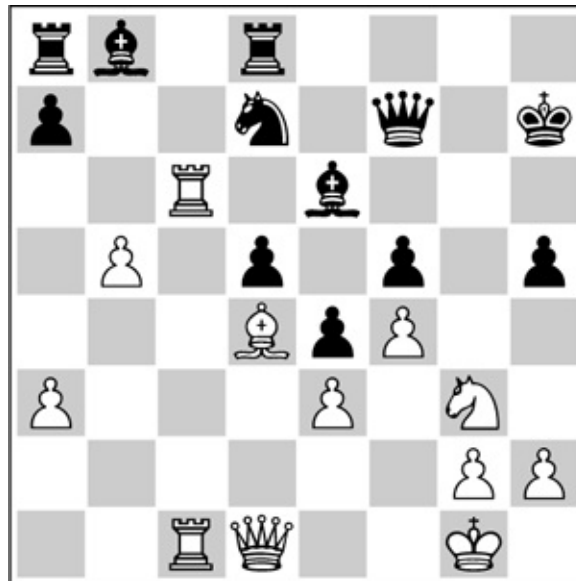
for the knight. Since the d4-square is already used optimally by another white piece, g5 looks like the obvious square to send the knight to. With that, the solution to the problem of this position is quickly found. In the second diagram position White played the attractive move

### 1.Nh1!!

Putting the knight on the route h1-f2-h3-g5. Two exclamation marks for the originality of the idea in relation to the white player's age (15!).

Black is powerless, as White also exerts strong pressure on the black position via the open c-file. Furthermore, White can occupy the long diagonal, for instance with his bishop on a1 and his queen on b2. The continuation is instructive. The question should always be asked if White has tactical resources at his disposal.

For example, 1.Bxh5 looks very promising, too. Closer examination teaches us that the black king can be smoked out if the piece sacrifice is accepted: 1... gxf5? (the only move is 1... Nf8, but also then, Black's defending prospects cannot exactly be called rosy after the simple 2.Be2) 2.Qd1! Nf6 (the queen turns out to be overburdened after 2... Qf7



Analysis diagram

3.Rxe6! Qxe6 4.Qxh5+ Kg8 (another convincing line is 4... Qh6 5.Qf7+), after which the white pieces cooperate fantastically in the attack: 5.Nxf5 Nf8 6.Rc6 Qd7 7.Qh8+ Kf7 8.Rf6+ Ke8 9.Qxf8#) 3.Nxf5! and also here, Black won't be able to hold.

### 1...Nb6 2.Nf2 Rd6 3.Nh3 Kh6 4.Ng5

The knight has been manoeuvred straight to the strong square g5, and now

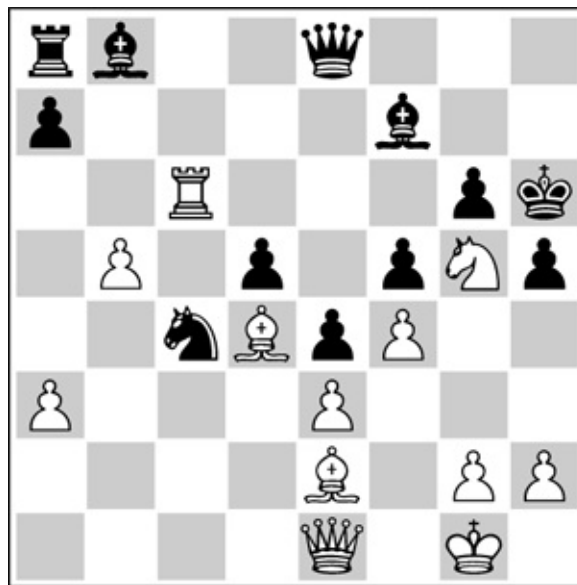
virtually all White's pieces are involved in the game.

#### **4...Rxc6 5.Rxc6**

This puts Black in an annoying pin, but he had to do something against the capture of his bishop, and against the fact that his rook on a8 is doing nothing.

#### **5...Bd6**

After, for instance, 5...Bf7, 6.Qb4! is terribly strong. After 6...Qe8 (now 6...Qxb4 is out of the question as it loses a piece after 7.Nxf7+ Kh7 8.axb4), White continues his mission with the pretty queen switch 7.Qe1!, which introduces a combination that cannot be parried. For example, 7...Nc4 fails to 8.Bxh5! and the black king is smoked out. Now even the bishop on e2 turns out to participate in the battle! 8...Kxh5 9.Qg3 with unavoidable mate.



Analysis diagram

#### **6.Qc3**

This way White makes quick progress. Setting up a battery of queen and bishop would take a little too long.

Perhaps even better was 6.Be5 Rd8 7.Qb2, after which the black player cannot cope with the many threats anymore.

#### **6...Rg8**

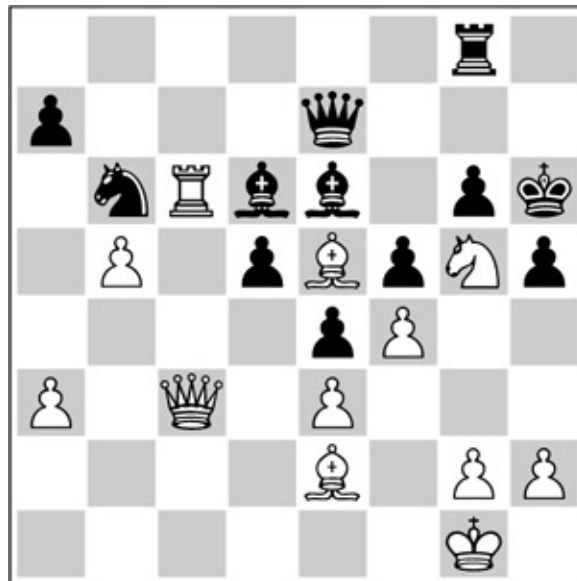
On, for instance, 6...Rc8, 7.Bxb6 wins because 7...Rxc6 fails to 8.Qh8+ and mate.

#### **7.Be5**

Winning material. The bishop on d6 is the most important defender (square c7 and the sixth rank!), and now that it is exchanged, the black building (or should we say: rubble?) is further demolished.

We cannot blame Piket for not finding the most vigorous variation. The moves he plays are entirely logical and result in an easy win. However, here again a hidden combination was possible that can only be unearthed with a strong chess program. Once again we see that if you have reached a strategically superior position where all your pieces are well-placed, there will always be something special to play for. The beautiful thing is that White needs all his pieces to achieve this magnificent mate picture.

For your instruction and your amusement, we give the following spectacular variation: 7.Bxh5!! gxh5 (curiously, the black king is again caught in a mating net after 7...Kxh5 8.Qe1, and there is nothing sensible to be found against the threat of Qe1-g3-h3) 8.Rxd6 (it's incredible that all this is possible) 8...Qxd6 9.Bg7+! (this is the actual point of the entire combination. Here it becomes clear why White had to start first with the bishop sacrifice Bxh5. With that move he has dismantled the protection that the black king enjoyed from the pawn on g6. And that factor presages this magnificent mating line) 9...Rxg7 10.Qf6+ Rg6 11.Qh8#.



**7...Rc8 8.Bxd6 Qxd6 9.Rxc8**

Everything wins here.

**9...d4 10.Qc7**

10.Nxe6 dxc3 11.Rh8# was another cute line.

**10...Qd7 11.Rh8+**

**1-0**

The fact that Jeroen Piket so quickly found the right plan in this position at such a young age, can be ascribed to his deep understanding of the game and to his excellently developed positional feeling. But of course, he was also trained to

discover the right features in the position, which put him on the right track.

### **3.3 Karpov and Mazukevich's line of thinking**

We have now established that a well-founded positional assessment can be made by evaluating the characteristic features of the position in the right way. Each position has various features, and the trick is to discover (or to distinguish) what is important and what is not. In this chapter we shall try to achieve a line of thinking that enables you to detect the important features of an arbitrary position. If everything goes right, you will then have taken hold of the right orientation in the position, enabling you to conceive the correct plan on that basis.

In their book *Stellungsbeurteilung und Plan*, Karpov and Mazukevich employ seven criteria to assess a position.

Next, a plan is formed that is in logical conformity with the assessment of the position. In fact, a kind of research is carried out, in which the white position is compared with the black position.<sup>1</sup>

I have slightly adapted this method to analyse a position, and I have tested it in training sessions with young players. They were asked to 'think aloud' with the help of the following questions.

1. What is the material balance?
2. Are there any (direct) threats?
3. How is the safety of both kings?
4. Pawn structure:
  - a. Where are the open lines and diagonals?
  - b. Are there any strong squares?
  - c. Who is controlling the centre?
  - d. Who has more space and where on the board does he have it?
5. Which pieces are active and which are not?

In the following game, the interaction between pawn formation and set-up of pieces is demonstrated splendidly by the white player.

□ **Karpov, Anatoly**

■ **Spassky, Boris**

Leningrad m 1974 (9)



This is an important moment to choose a plan. The only open file is the d-file, whereas White can exert pressure along the half-open f-file. Moreover, White possesses the bishop pair, and the light squares may play an important role.

### **1.Qf1!**

A beautiful, multifunctional move. White increases the pressure along the f-file, while the queen vacates the d1-square for the queen's rook. In some cases, the queen can try to take the black position under control from the beautiful c4-square.

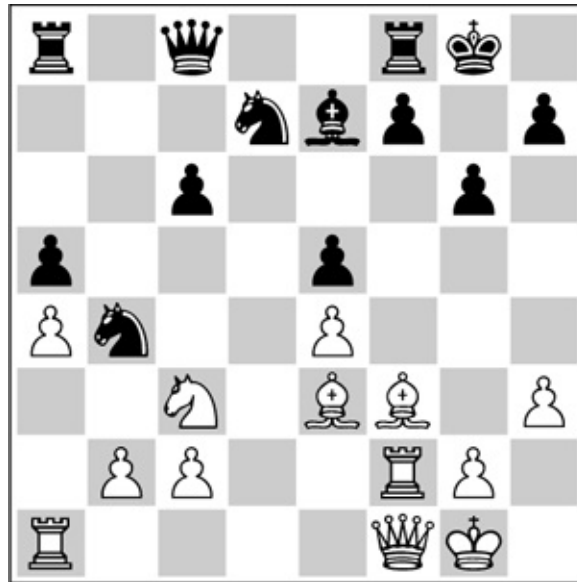
### **1...Qc8 2.h3**

White anticipates the threat of 2...Ng4.

### **2...Nd7**

Also possible was 2...Qe6, but then White would play his bishop to c4 (see also the comment to the first move).

The question is: how should White increase the pressure on the black position?



### 3.Bg4

Very well spotted by Karpov! Due to the annoying pin on the knight, Black must weaken his king position further.

Incidentally, 3.Qc4 was another good possibility to pose Black problems.

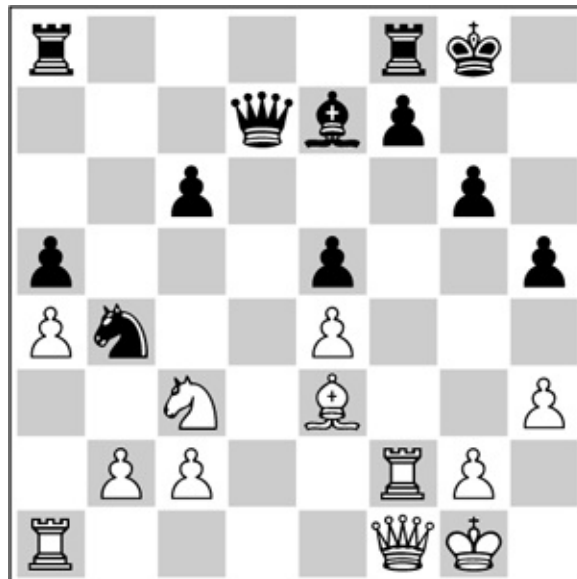
### 3...h5

A crucial moment. Will White trade off his bishop on d7 or not?

### 4.Bxd7

A principled decision. With a heavy heart, White parts with his bishop pair, but this is a good decision. He wins time and can keep on exerting pressure.

### 4...Qxd7



### 5.Qc4

Obviously, the black queen must be kept away from the beautiful square e6. At the same time, White maintains the pressure on the weak point f7.

### 5...Bh4

Spassky is defending creditably. The white rook is kicked off the f-file, and in future he hopes to exploit the 'hole' on g3. If he gets the time for it, he wants to brick up the f-file with ...Bh4-g3, followed by ...h5-h4, ...g6-g5 and ...Bg3-f4.

### 6.Rd2 Qe7

Another crossroads, where White must choose between several attractive continuations.

### 7.Rf1!

Better than the tempting 7.Bc5, which only leads to unclear complications after 7...Qg5 8.Rd7 Nxc2 9.Bxf8 Rxf8.

### 7...Rfd8

Black enters the battle for the d-file. His minor pieces are hindering White's further development. With his next move, White kills several birds with one stone. But first we will subject the position to a closer examination.

As said, it is useful to put the problems of the position into words point by point. For this purpose, we use a variant of the line of thinking developed by Karpov and Mazukevich in their book *Stellungsbeurteilung und Plan*. With the help of a number of points, the authors help us to achieve a correct assessment of the position, and derive the right plan from that:



#### 1. Material balance

Material is even.

#### 2. Are there any direct threats?

White does not have any direct threats; however, Black is threatening to win a

pawn with 1...Rxd2 2.Bxd2 Nxc2.

### **3. The safety of both kings**

We have a special case here. Normally speaking, important indications about safety are given:

- counting the number of attackers;
- counting the number of defenders ;
- counting the number of pawns.

If in this case we count the pawns that are in the neighbourhood of the king (three for Black versus two for White), we are inclined to think that Black's king is safer than Whites. However, that is not the case, since the placement of the pawns is very unfavourable for Black. His king's position contains two enormous weaknesses. The pawns on g6 and h5 would be better placed on g7 and h7. Since that is not the case, the dark squares in this area are significantly weakened. On the other hand, the white king is fairly well protected, as there are no black pieces that can approach it for the time being, and there is also a sufficient amount of defenders at hand.

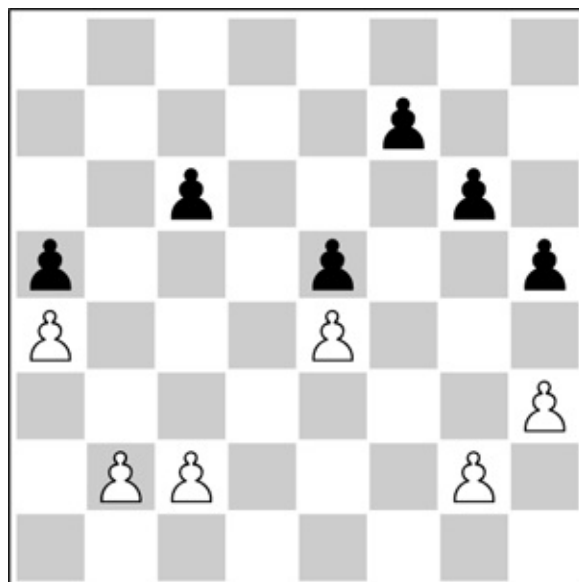
### **4. Pawn structure**

When studying the pawn structure, we constantly look which pawns are weak, where the open and half-open files are, which diagonals are of importance, and where we can spot strong squares.

What can we read from the current pawn formation?

The control of the open files works out in White's favour. Only the d-file is completely open, and it is contested between both sides. Of the half-open files, White's f-file is more important than Black's b-file. This is because via the f-file the white pieces will eventually be able to launch threats against the weakened black king position (see schematic analysis diagram).





Analysis diagram

In the pawn structure we also see that both sides have three pawn islands. However, we can make a small distinction in the weaknesses of the various pawns. The isolated pawn on e4 can hardly be attacked by Black, whereas its 'loose' colleague on c6 is badly in need of protection.

Two pawn pairs are fixed: a4/a5 and e4/e5. Since both sides have a dark-squared bishop on the board, this factor is to White's advantage.

Also a lot can be said about strong and weak squares. From the pawn structure we can read that White can try to exploit the beautiful squares c4, c5, and later on also the dark squares on the kingside. Black also has his eye on a weak point in the white camp: square g3! We have already seen above that the bishop would like to settle down on this square (or on the f4-square), nipping in the bud all white actions along the f-file.

Finally, we will have to examine how the situation is with respect to the centre and space. Since the pawns on e4 and e5 have advanced 'equally far', neither side has more space. However, thanks to his occupation of the beautiful square c4 White has a little more influence in the centre. At the same time, we should observe that the weak pawn on c6 fulfils a useful function. The white c3 knight cannot go to d5, so that this piece is not participating in the game for the time being.

### 5. Activity

This is perhaps the most essential aspect of the game. When conceiving a plan, we have to look especially which pieces are active and which are passive. Only if we see what a position is really about, can we start to feel which moves should

be considered. In practice, this turns out to be much more difficult than you would expect at first sight.

Let's conduct a small test. Without reading further, write down three moves for White that you think would be considered by Karpov, or that you might play yourself. I have also done this test with some of Holland's best youth players. Without examining the proposed moves further, we continued on the path of unveiling the secrets of this position.

As a small addition to Karpov and Mazukevich's line of thinking, I have invented the following guideline.

Compare the activity of the same piece types :

**a) The queens**

White's queen is much more active. It is attacking the weak points c6 and f7. Black's queen has an exclusively passive role.

**b) The rooks**

The opponents on the d-file are equally important – the white rook on the f-file does more than its counterpart on a8. Therefore, Black would be helped by exchanging them.

**c) The bishops**

On the basis of the pawn formation we have already established that White's bishop is much better than Black's. Apart from the fact that it controls the important square d4, it can move to c5 (so as, in an endgame, to possibly take aim at the a5 pawn) or to h6, from where it would support an attack on the king. However, we shouldn't underestimate the role of the black bishop either. As we have seen, it threatens to enter on g3 and in the right circumstances it could settle on the f4-square, after which White's attacking chances would disappear like snow in summer.

**d) The knights**

The white knight is doing nothing at the moment. The black knight, however, is active for the time being (in view of the annoying attack on c2), and it also keeps the pawn on c6 protected.

With this last observation, we have hit the nail on the head and we finally approach the essence of the position. Let's think aloud for a little longer before we draw any conclusions.

White would like to start an attack on the black king via the f-file, and for that purpose he will have to keep at least one pair of rooks on the board. In order to launch the attack, he will have to prevent the black bishop from keeping the f2-square covered, and from becoming even more annoying on the square g3.

Furthermore, he will have to find a solution to the threat of ...Rxd2 in a useful manner.

If everything is right, now a bell will start ringing! White sees that his knight is doing nothing. Therefore, it should be repositioned. But where? Repositioning the knight also has other advantages, since it enables White to introduce the pawn move c2-c3, kicking away the temporarily active black knight. So that is a nice extra.

But where should White play his knight? Not to a2, as there it will be traded off by Black. To d1 or e2? That isn't very attractive either after 8...Rxd2, as then White must take back with this well-placed bishop, losing activity.

What is actually the future of the white knight?



### 8.Nb1!!

Please write down two exclamation marks! And be honest: had you considered this move? If yes, then you have good positional feeling! If no, this isn't the end of the world, but in that case you will have learned something important now. In the further course of the game it will become clear that after this move the knight fulfils an important role in the white concept. The knight will be repositioned on f3, where it can lend a hand with the intended kingside attack. In passing, it will also attack the annoying intruder on h4, which will have to make way, since a trade of knight against bishop would weaken the dark squares on Black's kingside still further.

Moreover, White will take aim at the pawn on e5, giving Black still more problems to deal with. And the quiet knight move has yet another merit: after 8...Rxd2 White can harmoniously take back with the knight. Also, the threat of c2-c3 has become acute, with which the black knight will be driven away from b4 and the pawn on c6 will be hanging.

### 8...Qb7

If you have read the above argument thoroughly, you now know that Black would gladly exchange a pair of rooks. But at this moment this would be highly unfortunate, since after 8...Rxd2 9.Nxd2 Black must keep protecting both his c6 pawn and his e5 pawn, while his bishop is about to be chased away from h4.

### **9.Kh2**

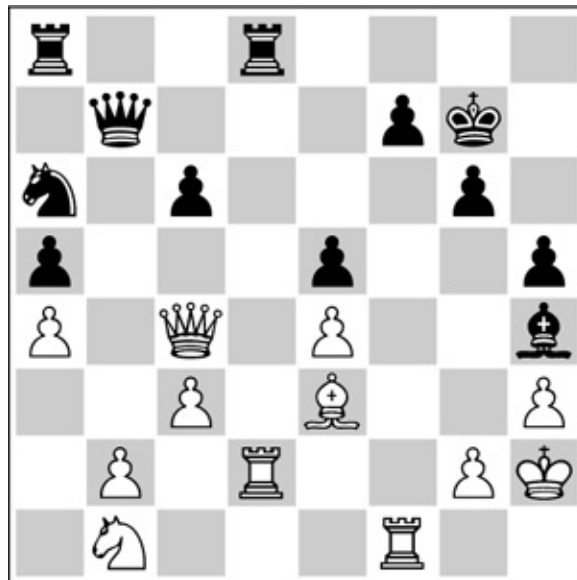
Again the only correct continuation. White should prevent ...Bg3 at all cost.

### **9...Kg7**

Understandably, Black moves away from the pin on the a2-g8 diagonal and he covers the square h6.

### **10.c3 Na6**

The contours of White's plan are starting to take shape. Black's once so proud knight is suddenly condemned to the role of a passive onlooker.



### **11.Re2!**

I could also have presented you this position and again asked: assess the position, and what is the plan? This time we will not elaborate for so long. White's line of thought is more or less as follows: he prepares a kingside attack, and for that purpose he sends a knight in the direction of the black king. Therefore, the square d2 has to be vacated, and since White still wants to keep the rooks on the board, he now removes his rook. After all, Black cannot make use of the d-file. How simple does all this sound! But how hard it is if you have to think it up for yourself!

11.Rxd8 would not be to the point here. Black would be better off after this swap. And you do not play a move like 11.g3 either unless it's really necessary. Karpov will not voluntarily allow weaknesses in the vicinity of his own king. Weakening the second rank is always risky if your king is on it.

### 11...Rf8

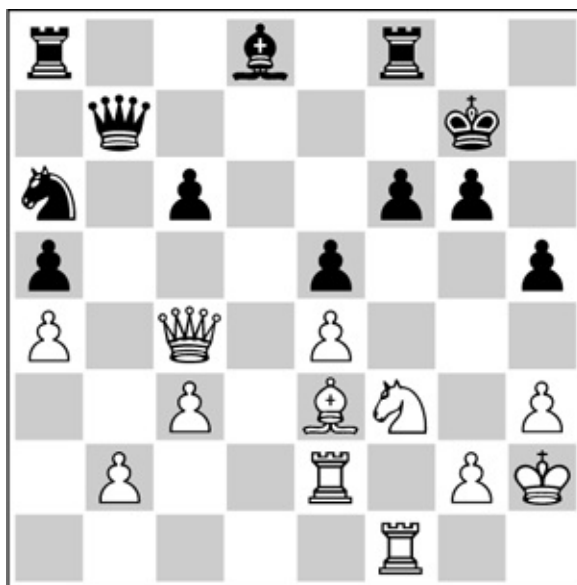
Black realizes that he must take counter-measures against the threats along the f-file, and at the same time he vacates the square d8 for his bishop, which he must be able to retreat after the next move.

### 12.Nd2 Bd8

Capturing on b2 was out of the question on account of 13.Nf3, winning a piece. 'Why go to this unfortunate square?', you may ask. The answer is that the threats against the weakened king position are starting to become acute. After 13...Be7 14.Ref2, Black must seriously reckon with various combinations.

### 13.Nf3f6

This is no picnic, but what else? The pawn on e5 was hanging.



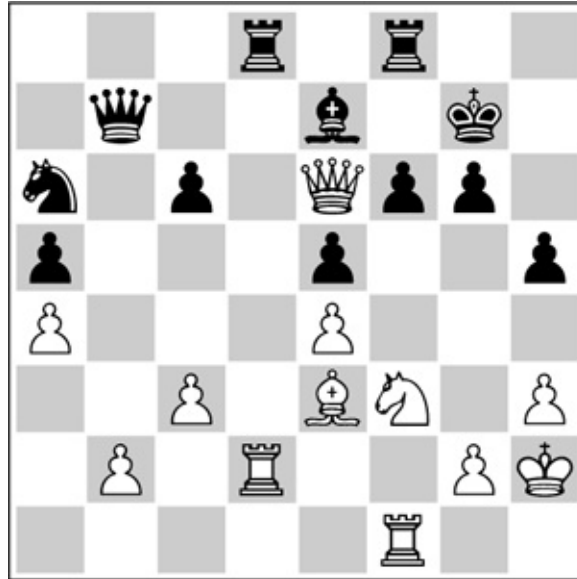
### 14.Rd2!

Flexible thinking is one of the hardest things in chess. Grandmasters are generally good at it. Just when we have aimed everything at an attack on the king, Karpov plays this paradoxical move. He has gone through all this trouble to conquer the f-file, and now he doesn't make use of it!

But Karpov has seen further. With ...f7-f6, the f-file has been more or less closed, but a new weakness has been created: square e6 has become a gaping hole! Now that Black's pieces are positioned unharmoniously, White makes use of the d-file, on which Black cannot oppose for now.

### 14...Be7 15.Qe6 Rad8

'But White didn't want to exchange rooks, did he?', many despairing readers will ask. But he does when there is a concrete reason for it – and that is why we always have to keep thinking flexibly!



### **16.Rxd8!**

Right! The rook swap is appropriate now.

### **16...Bxd8**

16...Rxd8 fails to 17.Nxe5 Qc7 (mate is unavoidable after 17...fxe5 18.Rf7+ Kh8 19.Qxg6) 18.Qf7+ Kh8 and now 19.Qxe7! Qxe5+ (quite pretty is the knight fork: 19...Qxe7 20.Nxg6+ Kg7 21.Nxe7 and White wins) 20.Qxe5 fxe5 21.Rf6 and White wins a second pawn.

### **17.Rd1!**

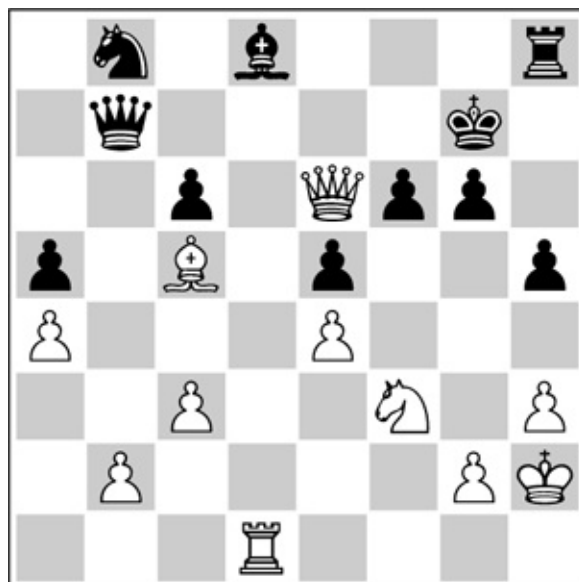
That d-file again. And again Black cannot oppose. See how beautifully Karpov has exposed the weaknesses in the black camp. The pawn move ...f7-f6 has mortally weakened the seventh rank.

### **17...Nb8 18.Bc5**

Finally a move with this bishop, but this is a deadly accurate one.

### **18...Rh8**

White can now crown his work. What is the best way to do that?



### 19.Rxd8!

1-0

The final blow! The black bishop, an important defender of the black bastions, is eliminated. Spassky didn't feel like sticking around waiting for the line 19... Rxd8 20.Be7 Re8 21.Qxf6+ Kh6, as now 22.Nh4 ends all resistance.

I have tested this line of thought with players who were my pupils. One of them was the highly talented Jan Werle, about whom I have written a few words in Chapter 1.

Since Werle didn't exactly live near me, we trained a few weekends at my home every year. In between those sessions I sent him training material with which he worked for himself. In the strength/ weakness analysis I made about him in those days, I came to the conclusion that his tactical level left something to be desired, and with diligent work he caught up enormously in a short period of time. That was one of the reasons why he made rapid progress.

Thus, at a certain moment we returned to the area where both our hearts lay: strategy. Werle was one of the first pupils with whom I tried the above-mentioned line of thinking for the solving of difficult problems. In spite of his youthful age, he solved many of these difficult strategic exercises excellently. Due to my approach the results of many of my pupils deteriorated first, as the new line of thinking was not so easily integrated in their game. Even a great talent like Werle suffered a few disappointments in the beginning. But he had faith in this training method and continued on the chosen path. And it didn't take him long to start achieving some great results. It was no surprise that he soon achieved the title of international master.

Today, many years later, he is a strong grandmaster who produces neatly

polished positional games, which I play through with great pleasure. Jan was – justifiably – very contented with the following game.

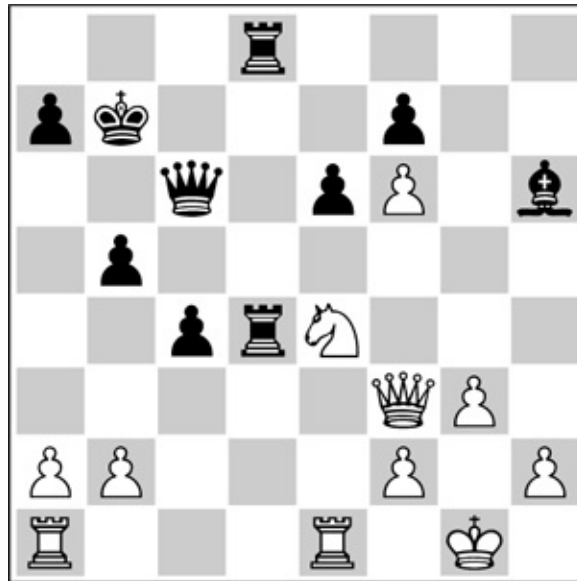
SL 7.4 (D44)

☐ **Werle, Jan**

■ **I'Ami, Erwin**

Leeuwarden eh-NED 2005 (8)

**1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 c6 3.c4 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5  
9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 11.g3 Bb7 12.Bg2 Qb6 13.exf6 0-0-0 14.0-0 Bh6  
15.Be3 c5 16.dxc5 Nxc5 17.Bxc5 Qxc5 18.Bxb7+ Kxb7 19.Qf3+ Qc6 20.Ne4  
Rd4 21.Rfe1 Rhd8**



**22.Re2!**

An improvement on a blitz game Ivanchuk-Piket, Wijk aan Zee 1999, where White continued 22.h4 R8d5 23.Re2 a5 24.Rae1 b4 25.Kh2 Kb6 26.Qg4. Now Black played 26...Bd2, but after 26...c3 27.bxc3 bxc3 28.Rc2 Bd2 29.Rb1 Rb5, he would have had absolutely nothing to fear.

**22...R8d5 23.a3!**

With this deep strategic thought Werle intends to restrict the black pawn majority somewhat. At the same time, he would prefer to keep the rook on the a-file. The reason for this will surface much later.

**23...a5 24.h4**

Thus Werle treads in Ivanchuk's footsteps, but he has weaved some refinements into the play. The pawn is pushed forward because this is Whites passed pawn



that will have to do all the hard work later on. Somewhat less obvious is that White clears square h2 for his king, so that it will not have to remain vulnerable on the back rank.

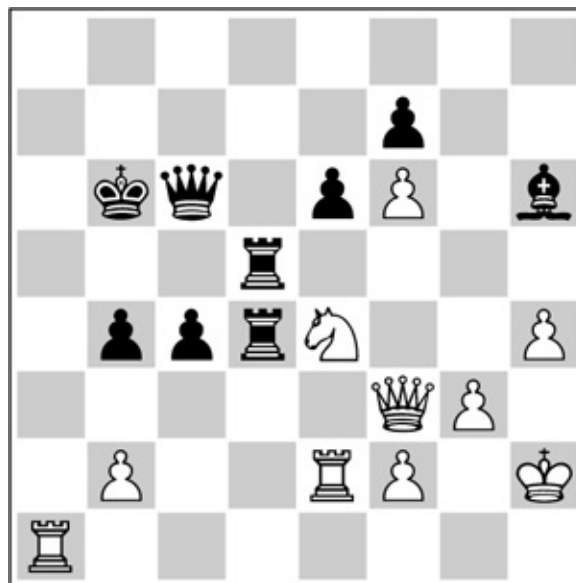
**24...b4?!**

Probably it is this absolutely logical move which causes huge problems for Black. Perhaps he had to opt for 24...Kb6 or 24...Rf5, even though in that case White could have achieved an advantage with the same concept as in the game.

**25.axb4axb4 26.Kh2**

The king has created a safe shelter for itself. Thus, the white player now has free hand to start some action of his own.

**26...Kb6**



**27.Qh1!!**

This is the key move for the entire concept that Werle had devised when he played his 23rd move. This is a suitable moment to take a closer look at this position – what's it all about, actually? The knight on e4 is the 'binding agent' in the white position. It seizes squares in the enemy camp, protects the f6 pawn, keeps an eye on the d2-square, gives extra protection to the weak point f2, and makes the pawn push ...c4-c3 unattractive as well. In fact, the knight enables White to keep full control over the following course of events.

Jan Werle told me that before this tournament he had worked through Nimzowitsch's book *My System*, and he had been especially inspired by the chapter on 'over-protection'. In the spirit of Nimzowitsch, the strongest piece on the board needed to be protected as thoroughly as possible.

With his last queen move White has vacated the square f3 for his pawn, so that he will be able to meet the possible threat of ...Rd5-e5 with f2-f3. This would

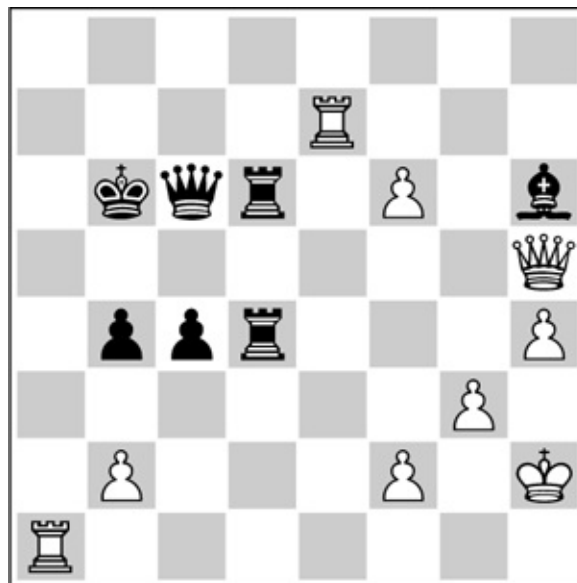
give the knight natural protection. Thus, White will not have to protect the knight with Ra1-e1, and he can keep the rook on the a-file.

The queen move has yet another purpose. The devious Qh1-b1-a2 has suddenly become possible as well, and with it White will suddenly be able to harass the black king. By the way, another merit of Qb1 is that it maintains the extra protection of the knight. The weakness of White's second rank hardly plays a significant role – not only because the d2-square is protected from an invasion by the black rooks, but also because the white king has a nice hiding place on h3, if necessary. All in all, this is a beautiful, multifunctional move, which has been introduced by a few problem-like moves that are signs of great strategic understanding.

Remarkably enough, this idea (in combination with the manoeuvre Qh1-b1) was also found in no time by the 14-year old talent Quinten Ducarmon from the Dutch province of Zeeland.

A sharp move like 27.Ng5!?, which was thought up by the talented 15-year-old girl Anne Haast, is not easy to combat:

A) Now 27...Qc7? would be wrong in view of the pretty piece sacrifice 28.Nxe6! fxe6 29.Rxe6+ Rd6 (29...Kb5 30.f7) 30.Re7 Qc6 31.Qh5! and the double threat of 32.Qa5 and 32.Qxh6 decides the issue in White's favour;



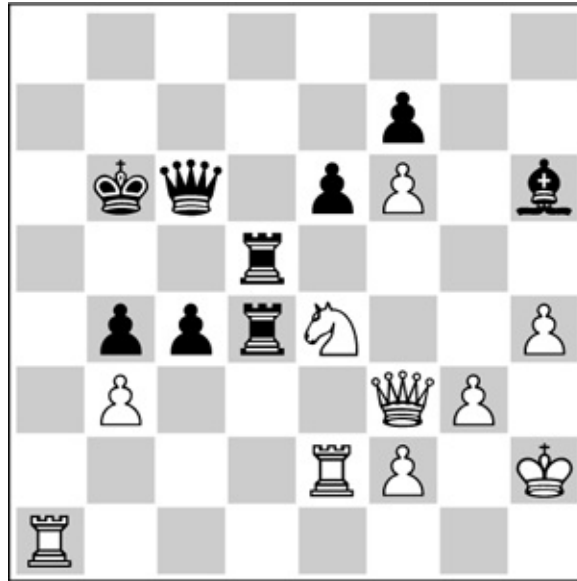
Analysis diagram

B) 27...Rd3 28.Qh5 Rd1 29.Rxd1 Rxd1 30.Ne4 is also very good for White because both the Bh6 and the f7 pawn are hanging. If Black tries 30...c3 here, he will also lose: 31.bxc3 bxc3 32.Ra2! Qd5 33.Qe2! – the unsafe position of the

black king continues to stand out, and now 33...Qd3 fails to 34.Nxc3!;

C) 27...Bxg5! (this is the move Black should rely on) 28.hxg5 Rd3 29.Qe4 R3d4 30.Qe3 e5, and the damage for Black is limited.

Another logical move to try to 'smoke out' the black king is 27.b3!?.



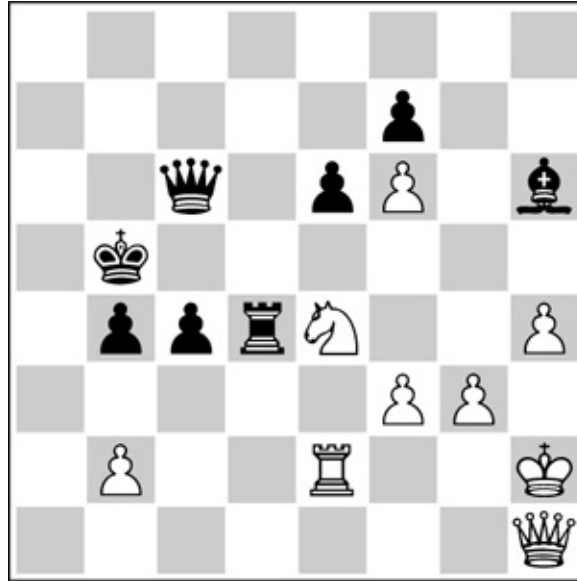
Analysis diagram

However, Black replies with 27...Rf5 28.Qg2 cxb3, when he will have nothing to fear.

**27...Ra5**

Black does not feel like allowing the doubling on the a-file, but with this move he gives up the strong pressure he had in the centre.

**28.Rxa5 Kxa5 29.f3 Kb5**



### 30.Qa1!

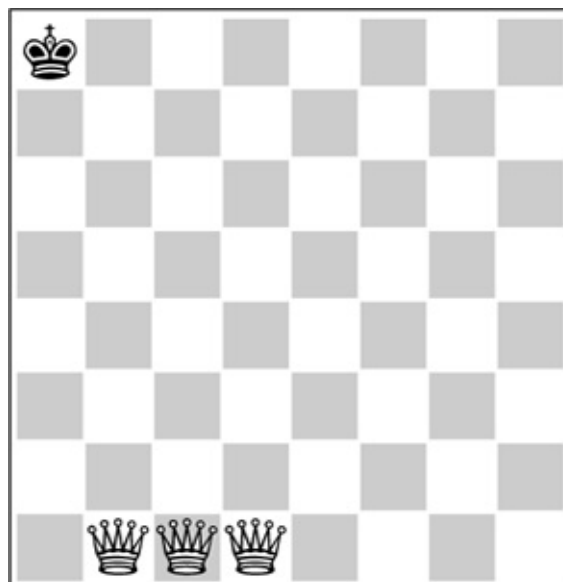
White manages to lure the black pieces even further out of their best positions. He introduces a few nasty threats, as becomes apparent from the mistakes that Black can make in this position.

### 30...Qa6

- A) 30...Bf8? 31.Qa7! Rd8 32.Qxf7, and the white pawn avalanche decides;
- B) 30...Qb7 31.Nc3+! bxc3 32.bxc3, winning material, as Black cannot cope with the double threat of Rb2+ and cxd4 anymore;
- C) 30...Rd8 31.Qa7 Rd7 32.Qb8+ Qb6 33.Qh8 Be3 34.Qe8, and also here, complete chaos is created among the black pieces.

### 31.Qg1

It is amusing to see how the white queen conducts her demolition job from the back rank. This reminds me of a funny position:



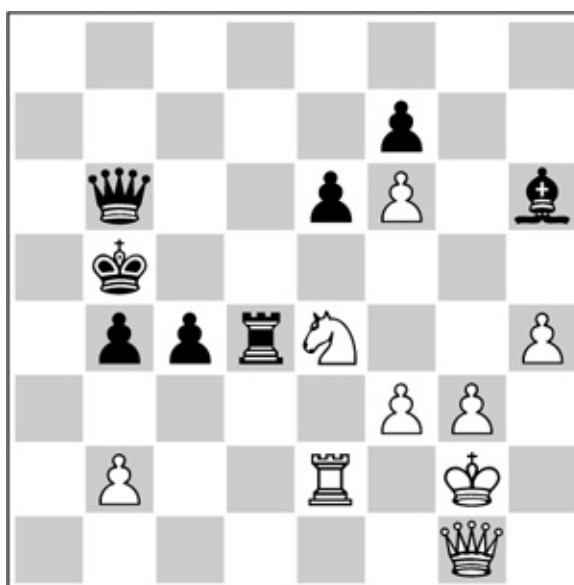
White has to give mate without taking his queens off the first rank. The solution is very artistic: 1.Qf1 Ka7 2.Qh1 Ka6 3.Qhg1 Ka5 4.Qgf1 Ka4 5.Qce1 Ka3 6.Qa1+Kb3 7.Qeb1#.

After the text move, the black rook is under threat.

**31...Qb6**

In my opinion, 31...Rd5 was relatively better, but also then White would be able to carry through his winning plan unhindered, as in the game.

**32.Kg2**



Also very interesting was 32.Rc2!?, in order to maintain the pressure. Black can hardly move a piece, since after a rook move he would lose the c4 pawn: 32...

Rd3? 33.Qxb6+ Kxb6 34.Rxc4.

### 32...Rd3

In desperation, l'Ami seeks refuge in an endgame, but this won't save him. Here, 32...Qd8 was the rather unattractive alternative, after which White continues with the very strong 33.Re1!, enabling the other rook to be deployed on the a-file. It is not clear what Black can do about this.

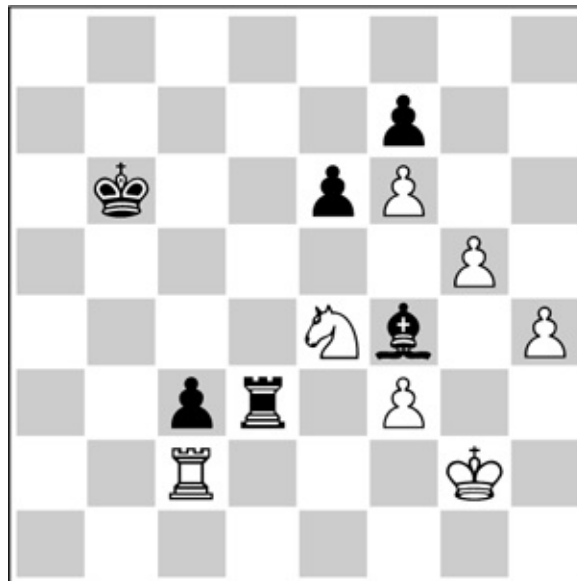
### 33.Qxb6+ Kxb6 34.g4 Bf4 35.g5

At first sight things do not look so bad for Black, but all is not what it seems. White's pawn mass is much more mobile than Black's. Please note how strong the knight is compared to the bishop in this position.

### 35...c3?!

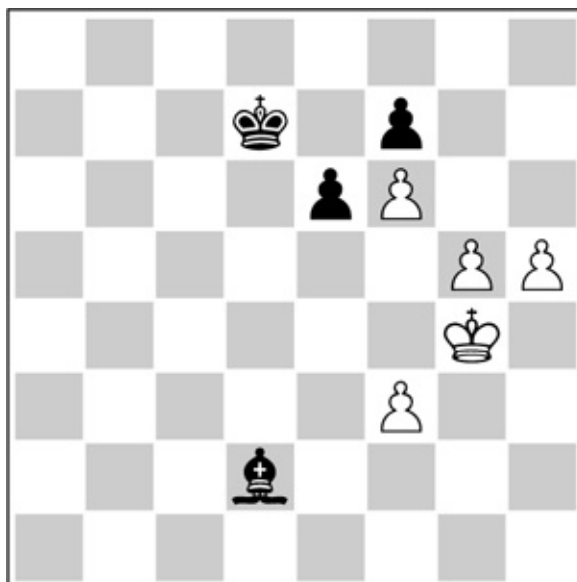
Black plays his trump card, but this backfires immediately. He should have chosen a much more prophylactic set-up with 35...Rd5. The h4-h5 push must be stopped as long as possible, and at all cost. Still, this wouldn't prevent White from preparing the march of his pawns with Kg2-h3-g4.

### 36.bxc3 bxc3 37.Rc2



### 37...Bd2

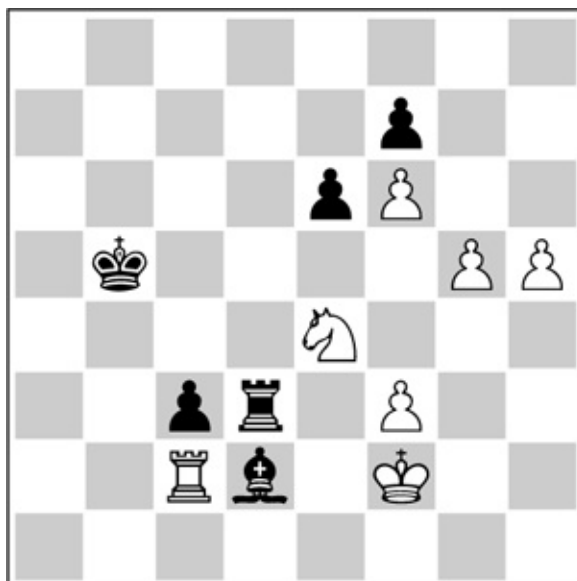
It's hard to give Black good advice here. Also the exchange sacrifice 37...Rd2+ 38.Nxd2 cxd2 immediately backfires in view of the pointed 39.Rxd2! Bxd2 40.Kg3 Kc6 41.Kg4 Kd7 42.h and the h-pawn will march on unhindered to its promotion square.



Analysis diagram

**38.Kf2 Kb5 39.h5!**

An excellent move that ends all resistance.



Black resigned. A possible variation is: 39...Kb4 40.g6 Rd8 41.g7 Kb3 42.Rxc3+ Bxc3 43.Nxc3 Kxc3 44.h6 and the white pawns have carried the day!

In the comments that I asked him to write with reference to my analysis, Werle himself writes :

‘I am very pleased that this game gets more recognition now. After the Dutch Championship, on chesspro.ru, which is a prestigious chess website, my duel

with I'Ami was crowned the best game of the tournament together with the confrontation Van Wely-Smeets (where the Botvinnik was more or less refuted). Also my former second, grandmaster Zviad Izoria, who was in the United States at the time, was highly impressed.

In Holland we hardly heard anything about it. I am glad that now more people will get the idea that strategic chess can also be fantastic chess. In my opinion, this is my best game ever, and I am very proud of it. There have been games where I've had some tactical violence on the board, games that provided a good show, but that didn't give me the satisfaction that I felt after this game.'

These are nice words that emphasize that positional play can indeed be beautiful. And they also prove that Jan is a true lover of the game!

### **Footnote**

- 1 I have taken the liberty to make an adaptation to this system given by the authors Karpov and Mazukevich, which was not well-ordered in my opinion. Of course, I have kept the essence of the system intact.



## Chapter 4

# Material advantage

### 4.1 Steinitz and Romantic chess

In Steinitz's day, material played an important role. Or rather: sacrificing material was predominant. Gambits were very popular, and they often led to early attacks against the enemy king. To attack was the motto – if necessary, at all costs.

This period is rightly called The Romantic Age, for many combinational games of those days were extremely pretty. Material was quite lavishly thrown about, and there was a kind of 'Romantic code' that caused this way of playing to be successful: it was considered unsportsmanlike to refuse a sacrifice.

After the rationalism of Philidor, the first, unofficial World Champion, who had also managed to formulate a number of laws for the game, the Romantic Age had been a welcome change. From these times stem the following famous games that, indeed, demonstrate that the advantage of extra material can sometimes be quite relative. I give these games without much comment. The mates at the end of both games are exceptionally beautiful.

IG 5.8 (C52)

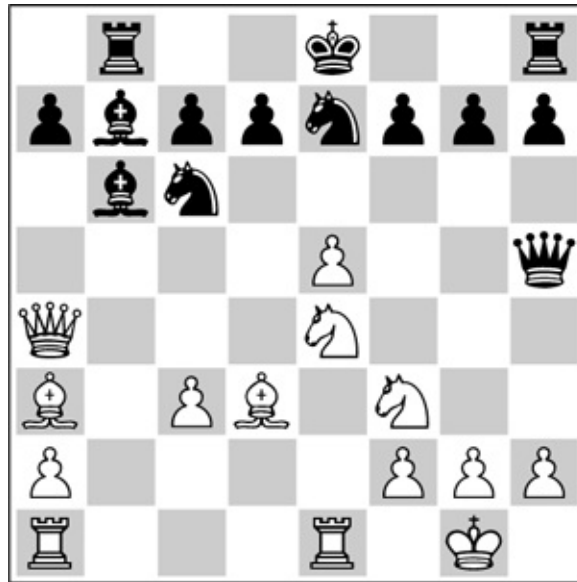
#### GAME 1

□ Anderssen, Adolf

■ Dufresne, Jean

Berlin 1852

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Ba5 6.d4 exd4 7.0-0 d3 8.Qb3 Qf6 9.e5 Qg6 10.Re1 Nge7 11.Ba3 b5 12.Qxb5 Rb8 13.Qa4 Bb6 14.Nbd2 Bb7 15.Ne4 Qf5 16.Bxd3 Qh5



The 'assault' on the black king is in full swing.

**17.Nf6+**

The start of an astonishing combination. 17.Ng3 was an excellent alternative here.

**17...gxf6 18.exf6 Rg8!**

Black shows that White is not the only one playing!

**19.Rad1!**



**19...Qxf3?**

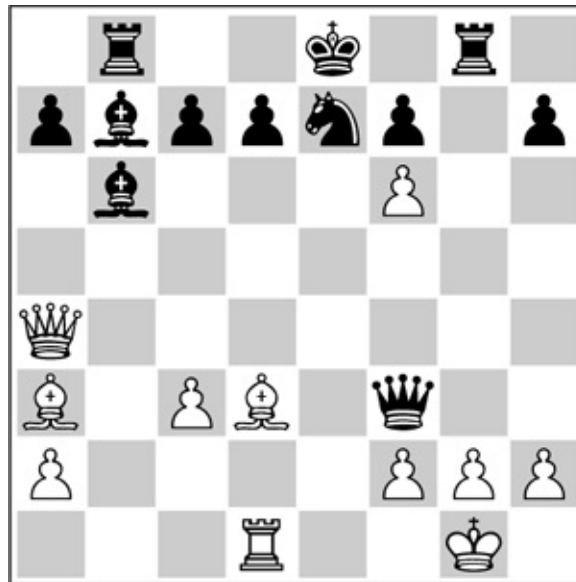
At first sight Black appears to come out on top, since the white king also finds itself in great danger. After many analyses, 19...Rg4 turned out to be the correct continuation for Black. But thanks to his mistake, White is allowed to bring his

stunning combination into the limelight.

If Black tries to justify his set-up by 19...Rxc2+!? 20.Kxc2 Ne5, White has the same trick as in the game: 21.Qxd7+ Kxd7, after which 22.Bg6+ Ke6 23.Bxh5 gains material for him.

### **20.Rxe7+! Nxe7!?**

Fortunately Black cooperates, but also after the slightly better 20...Kd8 Black would have lost, see: 21.Rxd7+! Kc8 (21...Kxd7 22.Bf5+ Ke8 23.Bd7+ Kd8 24.Bxc6+ and mate) 22.Rd8+! Kxd8 (22...Rxd8 23.gxf3; or 22...Nxd8 23.Qd7+!! – the same motif as in the game) 23.Be2+ (less clear is 23.Bf5+) 23...Nd4 24.Bxf3 Bxf3 25.g3 Bxd1 26.Qxd1, with a winning endgame.



**21.Qxd7+!! Kxd7 22.Bf5+ Ke8 23.Bd7+Kf8 24.Bxe7**



Rounding off with an exquisite mate.

1-0

SI 39.7 (B44)

## GAME 2

☐ **Morphy, Paul**

■ **Anderssen, Adolf**

Paris m2 1858 (9)

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e6 5.Nb5 d6 6.Bf4 e5 7.Be3 f5?**

After 7...Nf6 8.Bg5 a6, according to present-day theoretical opinion, Black has nothing to complain about.

**8.N1c3!**

Morphy was famous for his logical play. Piece development before all.

**8...f4**

After 8...a6 9.Nd5! axb5 10.Bb6, White is already winning.



**9.Nd5!**

A pretty piece sacrifice, with which Morphy demonstrates that sometimes material is less important than piece activity.

**9...fxe3 10.Nbc7+ Kf7 11.Qf3+?**

Stronger was 11.Nxa8, but Morphy prefers to go after the enemy king!

**11...Nf6 12.Bc4**

With each move a new piece joins the attack.



**12...Nd4!**

Black is putting up a good show as well.

**13.Nxf6+d5!**

Anderssen continues to fight back.

**14.Bxd5+Kg6?**

Today's computer programs allow us to discover that Black could have posed his opponent much greater problems with 14...Ke7!, although White keeps the upper hand with 15.Qh5 gxf6 16.Qf7+ Kd6 17.Nxa8.

**15.Qh5+ Kxf6**



**16.fxe3!**

This way White opens the f-file, after which a new piece can be involved in the

attack.

**16...Nxc2+**

This loses, but also after 16...Qxc7 17.0-0+ Ke7 18.Rf7+ Black would have had nothing left to play for.

**17.Ke2**

And Black surrendered.

Wilhelm Steinitz was in fact the first to take a critical stance against this 'Romantic School' and put question marks to all these sacrificial feasts. He seriously doubted their correctness, and not without justification.

Steinitz tried to demonstrate that, if the combinations turned out to be incorrect, he could not appreciate their appeal, even if the game was won in brilliant fashion. As the first official World Champion, Steinitz made a habit of accepting the first (and sometimes also the second) sacrifice, but refusing the gifts that followed after that, in order to show that he couldn't be outfoxed that easily.

In fact, he was the first to approach the game scientifically. By playing through games of the masters of the day, he discovered certain methodologies, and he attempted to apply those in his own games. Furthermore, he was one of the first who succeeded in defending successfully against the attacking zeal of the Romantic School.

A historically important moment occurred in 1866, when in a match Steinitz beat Anderssen 8-6. Adolf Anderssen was universally considered to be the best player in the world, and he was a war-horse if ever there was one, but he turned out to have no answer to his great opponent's tough defence. The decisive factor in their confrontations was that Steinitz had the ability to 'sit still' in difficult situations where he had extra material (sometimes not more than an extra pawn), but was suffering an attack. If we relate Steinitz's games to today's strategic conceptions, we may consider that he overdid the 'pawn-grabbing' a little. Nevertheless, we can claim that one of the cornerstones of his theory remains upright: if the attacker has invested material, there is the restriction that simplifications are generally to the advantage of the defender. The following game illustrates this adage well.

KG 5.5 (C25)

**GAME 3**

□ **Steinitz, Wilhelm**

■ **Golmayo Zupide, Celso**

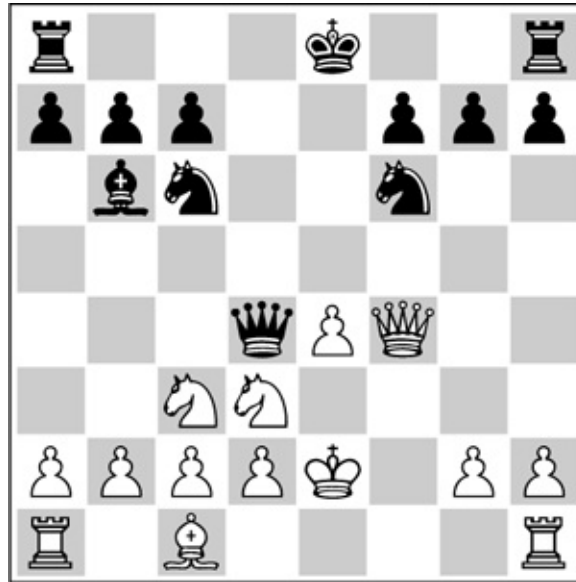
Havana 1889

**1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Bc5 3.f4 d6 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.fxe5 dxe5 6.Nxe5**

Nimzowitsch later advanced the proposition that any central pawn that could be captured unpunished, should be taken immediately. What Steinitz does here is too dangerous according to modern opinion.

**6...Qd4 7.Nd3 Bb6 8.Qf3 Nc6 9.Be2 Bg4 10.Qf4 Bxe2 11.Kxe2**

Now the white king is terribly exposed; Black has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn. However, this game illustrates Steinitz's provocative style.



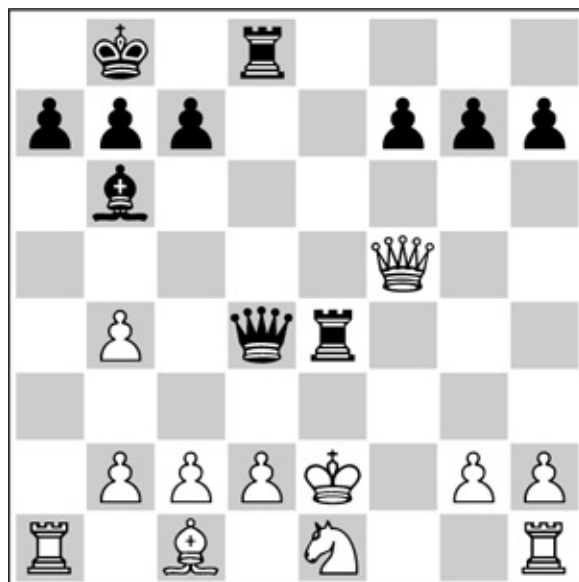
**11...0-0-0 12.Ne1 Nb4?!**

Black wants to render 13.d3 impossible (in view of 13...Nxc2), but it would have been better to play 12...Rhe8 first, and only after 13.d3 to continue with 13...Nb4.

**13.a3 Rhe8?!**

This looks promising, but the white position turns out to be 'fireproof'.

**14.axb4 Nxe4 15.Qf5+ Kb8 16.Nxe4 Rxe4+**



### 17.Kd1

Typically Steinitz. He is not at all concerned that his pieces are on the bottom rank; for him the feeling dominates that a material advantage is more important. In this game he is proved right.

### 17...Rf4 18.Qh3 Re8

18...Qxb4? would fail to 19.Nd3.

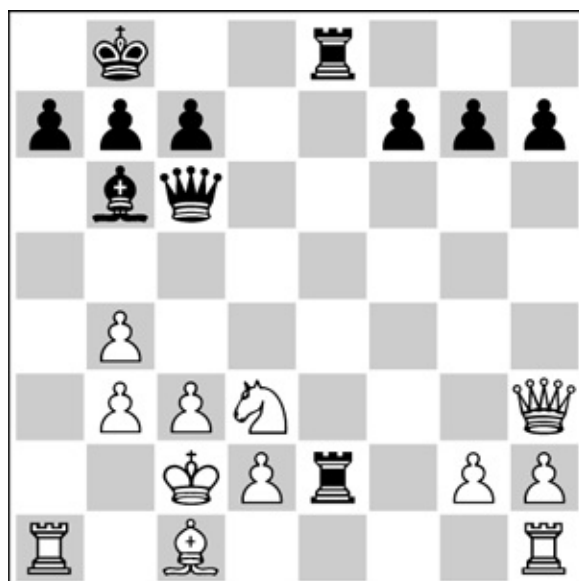
### 19.c3

Like an escape artist, White wriggles out of the straightjacket, after which he will try to convert his material advantage.

### 19...Qc4 20.Kc2 Rf2 21.Nd3 Rfe2

21...Qe4 22.Re1.

### 22.b3 Qc6





### **23.Qf3**

A typical manoeuvre in a position like this. The player who has more material offers an exchange of pieces, and since the attacker cannot accept this, the defender can improve the position of his pieces, and slowly take the sting out of the opponent's attack.

**23...Qg6 24.Rf1 R8e3 25.Qf5 Qc6 26.b5 Qd6 27.Nf4 Re5 28.Qxf7 R2e4 29.d3**

Finally White finds time for this move, after which Black's resistance is definitively broken.

**29...Re2+ 30.Nxe2 Rxe2+ 31.Bd2 1-0**

Thus, the 'Art of Defence' was elevated to the level of a kind of weapon in the arsenal of World Champions. In quite precarious situations, the world's elite players prove to be able to keep a clear head. They gratefully accept a material advantage and then conduct their defence. Strong players often tend to 'grab a pawn' and then 'sit on it'. Lasker was also famous for this.

RL 7.6 (C67)

### **GAME 4**

☐ **Winawer,Szymon**

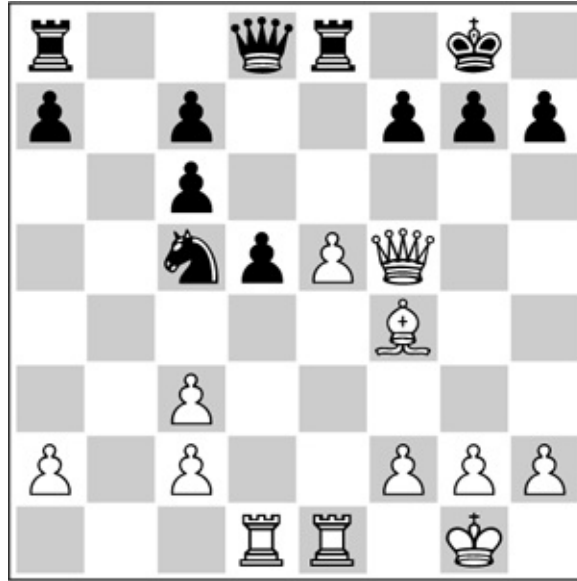
☒ **Lasker,Emanuel**

Nuremberg 1896 (14)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.0-0 Nxe4 5.d4 Be7 6.Qe2 Nd6 7.Bxc6 bxc6 8.dxe5 Nb7 9.Nd4 0-0 10.Nc3 Bc5 11.Nf5 d5 12.Qg4 Bxf5 13.Qxf5 Re8 14.Bf4 Bd4 15.Rfe1 Nc5 16.Rad1**

16.Nd1 is not exactly an improvement in view of 16...Ne4, and Black is clearly better.

**16...Bxc3 17.bxc3**



**17...Qc8**

Now that he has saddled White up with a doubled pawn, Black is prepared to exchange queens. If White avoids this, Black will attack his weak queenside pawns.

**18.Qh5 Qa6 19.Re3**

Logically, White opts for an attack. If 19.Be3 Ne4 20.Bd4 c5 21.f3, with counterplay.

**19...Qxa2**

It was known that Lasker was not above grabbing a pawn, in the belief that he would be able to reduce the opponent's play on the other side of the board to zero.

**20.Rc1 Qc4**

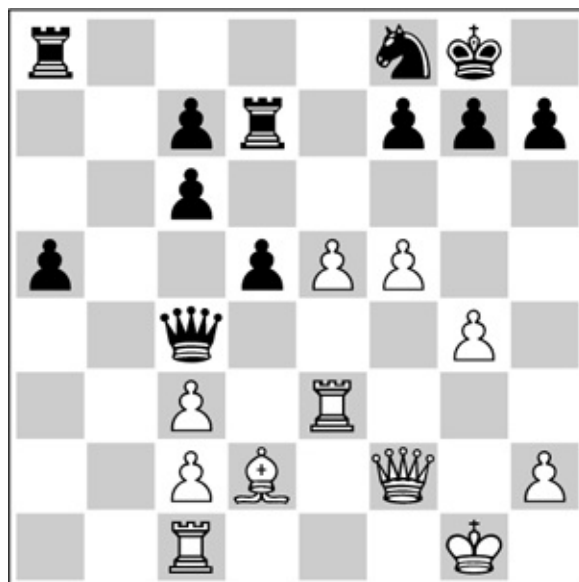
20...Re6 also came into consideration.

**21.Rf3 Ne6 22.Bd2 Re7 23.Rh3 Qe4 24.f3 Qg6 25.Qh4 Rd7 26.f4 Qe4 27.g4 27.Rd3.**

**27...Nf8 28.Qf2 a5**

If you have an extra pawn, you should make its presence felt!

**29.Re3 Qc4 30.f5**



### **30...a4!**

This pawn has to do all the work. Lasker shows no fear for the hostilities in the face of his king and does not fall for the temptation of taking the g4 pawn, since that would give White another attacking file. If 30...Qxg4+? 31.Rg3 Qc4 32.Bh6, White obtains attacking chances, for example: 32...g6 33.Rf1.

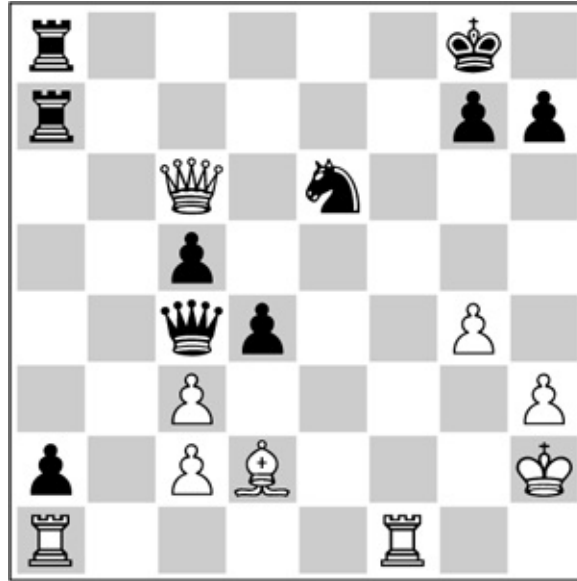
### **31.Rf1**

This is already the writing on the wall, but White no longer had a good continuation available. 31.e6? was no good either in view of 31...fxe6 32.fxe6 (or 32.f6 gxf6 33.Qxf6 Rf7, and White's attack peters out) 32...Nxe6 33.Rxe6 Qxg4+-; 31.h3 is too slow after 31...a3 32.e6 fxe6 33.fxe6 Re7 34.Qf5 a2 35.Rf1 a1Q, and Black wins.

**31...a3 32.Ree1 a2 33.h3 c5 34.Kh2 d4 35.Qf3 c6 36.e6**

**36.Qxc6 dxc3!, and Black wins.**

**36...fxe6 37.fxe6 Nxe6 38.Qxc6 Rda7 39.Ra1**



### 39...Rf8

It is clear that the initiative has passed on to the black player.

**40.Rfe1 Nd8 41.Qb6 Raf7 42.Bg5 Rf2+43.Kg3 Qxc3+**

And White resigned, as after 44.Kh4 Qxh3+! he will be elegantly mated:

45.Kxh3 R8f3+ 46.Kh4 Rh2#.

## 4.2 Technique

Sometimes, while playing through a game between grandmasters, we read the sentence ‘and the rest is a matter of technique’ at the end of the analysis. The author assumes that it is clear to everyone that the player in question will know how to convert his advantage into a win. How he does this is apparently not considered to be interesting, since at this point the commentary usually stops. The author tacitly takes for granted that a good player knows how to cash in on his advantage.

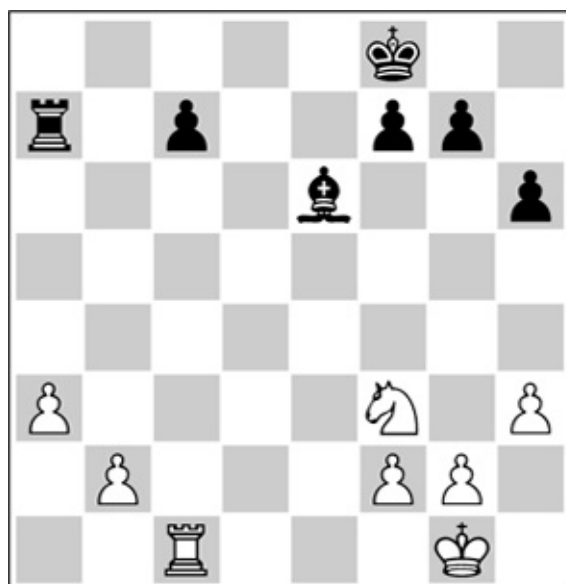
However, in practice this stage of the game turns out to be not as self-evident as it seems. To force the win requires an entirely different frame of mind than a player may be used to. The famous Russian trainer Alexander Kotov speaks of ‘schematic thinking’, meaning that the player should not think in ‘moves and variations’ but rather in ‘schemes and plans’. This is best explained with the help of the following example.

### GAME 5

□ **Capablanca, José**

■ **Ragozin, Viacheslav**

Moscow 1936 (4)



White has an extra pawn, but it seems that the win is still a long way off. However, winning from a position like this was right up Capablanca's street. The Cuban is generally seen as an endgame specialist *par excellence*. His games look quite simple when you play through them, but of course, in practice this is not the case. What does catch the eye is the great clarity with which Capablanca managed to get his pieces on the right squares. The secret lies mainly in his 'schematic way of thinking'.

So, in order to play the endgame better, we should not think in 'moves', but rather in schemes. Capablanca especially applied this technique to the treatment of endgames. The following anecdote is characteristic in this respect.

During a grandmaster tournament an interesting endgame has arisen. A number of spectators are busy unveiling the mysteries of the position on an analysis board. But no-one is able to come up with the correct path to the win, even though it appears to be close at hand. Then Capablanca enters the room and looks at the scene. After five minutes he intervenes. Instead of indicating a variation, he takes the pieces off the board and then puts them back on several 'ideal squares'. 'This position is an easy win', he says. 'You just have to find out how to play the pieces to these squares.' Then he leaves the room, leaving the spectators behind in awe. Of course! Now they have seen the 'ideal position', the variations are no longer difficult. Capablanca had sensed without fail where the pieces needed to go.

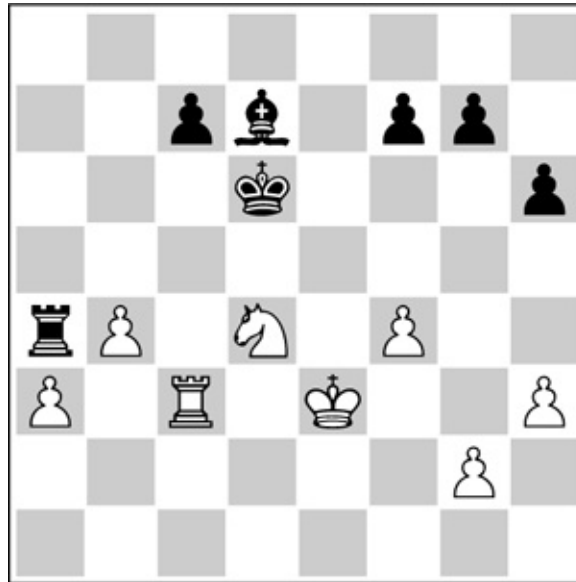
In the following fragment, the Cuban endgame virtuoso carries out this 'technique of schemes' to perfection. Starting from the diagram position, White attempts to strengthen his position in a number of stages. In the first stage he moves his king towards the centre.

Capablanca has indicated that from the diagram position, he strived to put his rook on c3, the knight on d4, his pawns on b4 and f4, and the king on e3. Therefore, White's task is to realize this scheme, and then to carry on from there.

**33.Nd4 Rb7 34.b4 Bd7 35.f4 Ke7 36.Kf2 Ra7 37.Rc3 Kd6 38.Rd3 Ke7 39.Ke3 Ra4 40.Rc3**

Better than 40.Ke4?! c5 41.bxc5 Bc6+ 42.Ke5 f6+ 43.Kf5 Bxg2 44.Rg3 Bd5=, as indicated by Capablanca.

**40...Kd6 41.Rd3 Ke7 42.Rc3 Kd6**



The first stage is completed. The pieces are on the squares where Capablanca wanted them to be. The next scheme is as follows: white king to d4, knight to e2 and rook to e3.

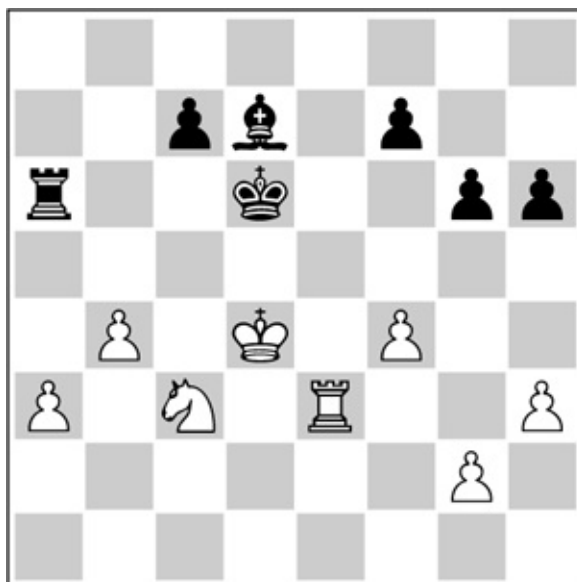
**43.Ne2 g6?!**

There was no reason for this weakening, but apparently Black deemed this move necessary.

**44.Rd3+ Ke6 45.Kd4 Ra6 46.Re3+ Kd6**

Perhaps, 46...Kf6 was an idea, although White could then still continue with 47.Nc3.

**47.Nc3**



The second stage is also completed, and what is more, White has achieved another small success by playing his knight to the useful square c3, making use of the motif of a *petit combinaison*: 47...Rxa3? fails to 48.Ne4+, winning the rook.

**47...f5?!**

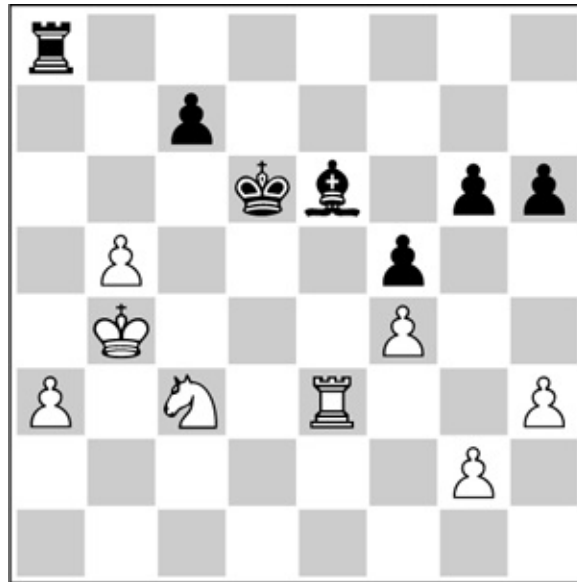
Again a deterioration of the black position.

In these new circumstances Capablanca formulated the third stage of his scheme as follows: pawn to b5, after which he can play his king to b4 and follow up with a3-a4. As soon as the a4 pawn is protected for a second time, White can deploy his knight elsewhere.

**48.b5 Ra8**

48...Rxa3 49.Ne4+ fxe4 50.Rxa3 Bxb5 51.Rg3 c5+ 52.Kxe4 Bc6+ 53.Kd3 Be8+- (Capablanca).

**49.Kc4 Be6+ 50.Kb4**



The third stage is completed. White is now ready to make his extra pawn operative (a3-a4-a5-a6).

**50...c5+**

Black decides not to sit and watch idly, and again changes the structure of the position.

**51.bxc6 Bg8**

Now the next stage must be entered. White plays his knight to b5 so as not to be harassed by checks by the black rook, and then his own rook will enter the sixth rank via the d-file, in order to conquer the black pawns on the kingside.

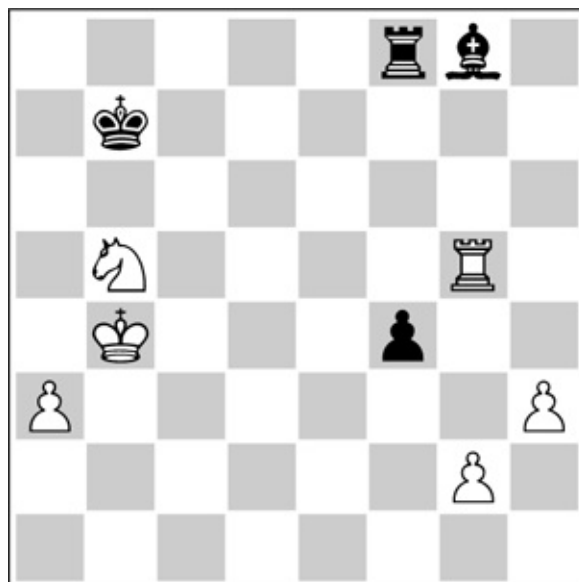
**52.Nb5+ Kxc6 53.Rd3 g5 54.Rd6+ Kb7 55.fxg5**

Also tempting was 55.Rxh6, but after 55...gxf4, with the idea of 56.Rf6 Bd5, the material would be seriously reduced, diminishing White's winning chances.

**55...hxg5 56.Rg6 Rf8 57.Rxg5f4**

Now White is two pawns up and he prepares to enter the final stage. First he must prevent ...f4-f3, and next White should improve the position of his rook somewhat, by playing it to the sixth or seventh rank. Then he can start pushing his passed h-pawn.





**58.Nd4**

Capablanca himself indicates that 58.a4! would have been stronger still.

**58...Rc8 59.Rg7+ Kb6 60.Rg6+ Kb7 61.Nb5**

White has to move his knight due to the threat of 61...Rc4+.

**61...Rf8 62.Nd6+Kb8 63.h4**

**1-0**

We have introduced the subject of 'schematic thinking'. We have to bear in mind that this way of thinking is only viable if the opponent cannot develop any activity and is forced to take up a wait-and-see attitude.

In view of this, it is very important to apply the 'don't hurry' principle. Or, to put it differently: he who stands better should often try to convert his advantage step by step, and not take any premature actions. By the way, this schematic way of thinking is applicable to many other aspects of the game as well. In countless endgames you should think in schemes rather than variations. But also in middle-game situations it is conceivable that devising a plan may be closely linked to this thinking pattern.

A strong player first wants to know where his pieces should go, and only then will he look at concrete variations.

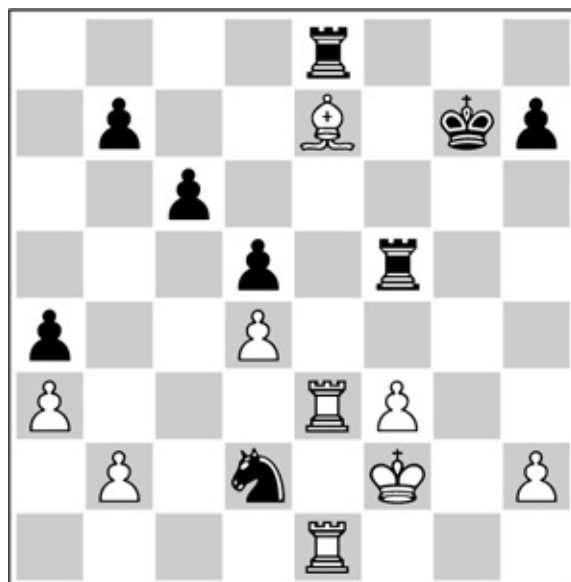
This methodical way of playing is quite beautifully illustrated in the following fragment.

## GAME 6

□ Smyslov, Vasily

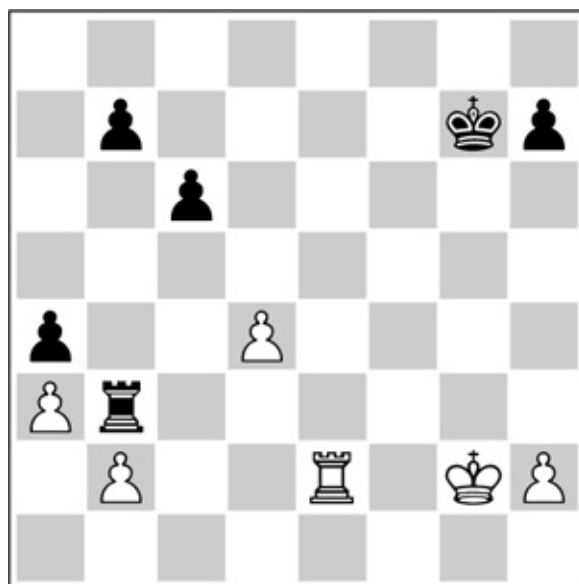
■ Keres, Paul

Moscow ch-URS 1941 (2)



In the diagram position, Black is clearly better on account of his superior pawn structure. White has various pawn groups, whereas Black has a beautifully connected formation on the queenside. With his next move Black liquidates to a rook ending that offers him good winning chances.

**30...Ne4+! 31.Kg2 Rxe7 32.fxe4 Rxe4 33.Rxe4 dxe4 34.Rxe4 Rb5 35.Re2 Rb3**



This was the position Black had in mind when he exchanged his knight for the bishop.

In this rook endgame Black disposes of various positional advantages. Firstly, White has three weak pawns: b2, d4 and h2, whereas Black's pawns are all well protected. Secondly, Black's rook is ideally placed. It attacks b2, protects b7 and,

from b3, cuts off the white king from the third rank. Thirdly, Black has a more active king, which will reach the square d5 sooner or later and will then be able to enter the queenside decisively. Since White has no counterplay, these factors guarantee Black a decisive advantage.

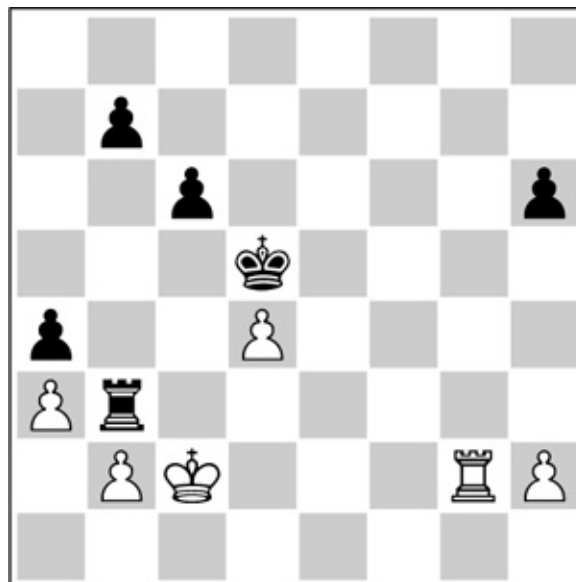
**36.Kf2 Kf6 37.Ke1 h6!**

A waiting move that puts White into zugzwang. Now he must allow the black king to enter the queenside, since a move with his king would cost him the d-pawn after 38...Rd3. For instance: 38.Kd1 Rd3+, and now White loses the pawn ending after 39.Rd2 Rxd2+ 40.Kxd2 Ke6 41.Kc3 Kd5 42.Kd3 h5 43.h4 b5, etc.

**38.Rg2 Ke6!**

Black does not get confused by the line 39.Rg6+? Kd5 40.Rxh6 Rxb2, after which there would be no more technical problems for him.

**39.Kd1 Kd5 40.Kc2**



**40...Rh3!**

Just as in the Capablanca example, here also the ‘don’t hurry’ principle applies. After 40...Kxd4? 41.Rg4+ Kc5 42.Rh4, White would save the draw. After the text move White is still left with two weaknesses: the pawns on d4 and h2.

**41.Rd2 Kc4 42.Kb1**

Now that all of Black’s pieces are ideally placed, it is time for a new scheme. The white rook is tied to the d2-square, where it is forced to grimly keep protecting the weaknesses on d4 and h2. This gives Black the opportunity to push his h-pawn to h3, and then to play his rook via f3, f1 and g1 to the newly-created foothold on g2.

Incidentally, there were several good alternatives, such as 42...Rh4.

**42...h5**

42...Kb3 would endanger the win due to 43.Rc2! (not 43.d5? Rf3 44.Rc2 Rf1+ 45.Rc1 Rxc1+ 46.Kxc1 cxd5-+), when things are not so clear: 43...Rd3 44.Rc1, and Black cannot take the pawn in view of mate, and therefore it is hard to see how he can make further progress.

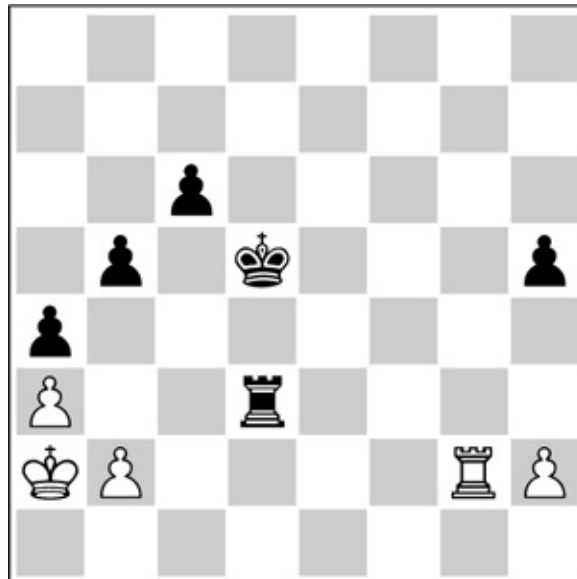
### 43.Ka2

If White remains passive, he will succumb to the above-mentioned plan. In his home analysis, Smyslov has found the most tenacious defence. His idea is to tuck the king away on a2, so that the black king cannot enter on b3 and the black rook can never reach the second rank with check. White has reconciled himself with the loss of the d-pawn.

### 43...Rh4 44.Rf2 Kxd4 45.Rf7 b5 46.Rf2 Rh3 47.Rd2+Rd3

Somewhat simpler was 47...Kc5 followed by 48...Kb6, as happens later on in the game.

### 48.Rf2 Kc4 49.Rc2+ Kd5 50.Rg2



Here the importance of schematic thinking is made clear. The last few moves by Keres have been a little aimless. Only now does he discover that a new plan is needed in order to make progress. The black rook belongs on h3, tying the white rook to the second rank and protecting its own h-pawn. In order to escape from the checks the black king must go to b6, after which it may be able to take shelter on a5. After that Black must push his c-pawn forward in order to later break open the second rank.

### 50...Rh3 51.Rd2+ Kc5 52.Rc2+ Kb6 53.Rf2 c5 54.Rf6+ Ka5 55.Rf2 c4 56.Rg2

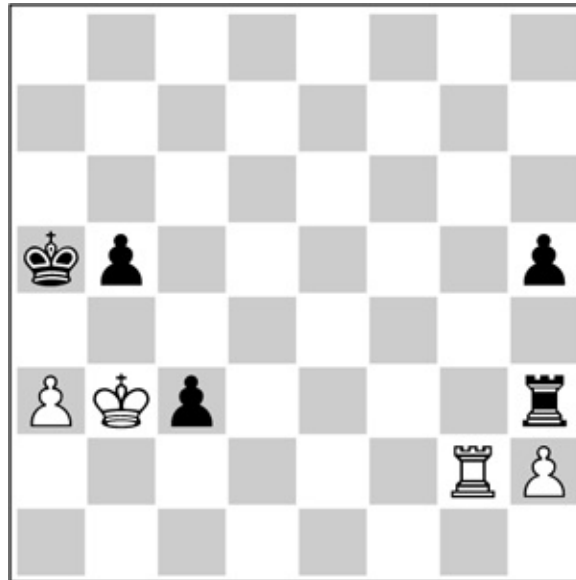
Black has neatly executed the aforementioned plan and now he prepares to enter a new stage. With ...c4-c3 he will again force an opening of the second rank,

after which he can once more take up the above-mentioned plan (...h5-h4, ... Rh3-f3, ...h4-h3, ...Rf3-f1-g1-g2). The opening of the second rank is essential in this plan, since after that White cannot undertake any activity with his rook, as in that case he will lose the pawn on h2.

**56...c3 57.b4+**

Instead, after 57.bxc3 Rxc3, the above-mentioned plan could no longer be prevented.

**57...axb3+ 58.Kxb3**



**58...c2+**

Black executes the plan in a slightly different version. With this check the white king is forced back to the first or the second rank again, after which the scheme that we have outlined can be executed.

**59.Kxc2 Rxa3 60.Kb2 Rf3 61.Re2 h4 62.Rd2 h3**

Slightly more accurate was 62...Rh3! 63.Rf2 Ka4! 64.Rd2 b4, after which the black king has improved its position somewhat. After that, Black can resume the thread.

**63.Re2**

The win would have taken up a little more time after 63.Rd4!, since after 63... Rf2+ 64.Kb3 Rxh2 65.Rh4 Black has to bring his king all the way up to the h-pawn in order to win. Now the rest is no longer difficult.

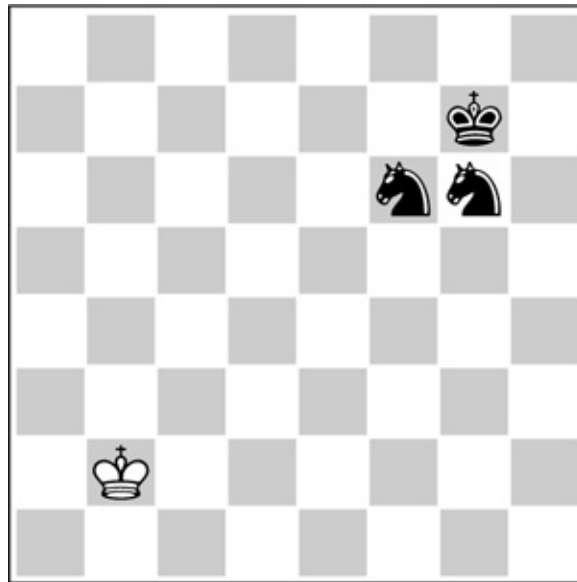
**63...Ka4 64.KM Rf1+ 65.Kc2 b4 66.Kd3 Rd1+ 67.Kc2 Rg1**

White resigned. After 68.Re3, 68...Rg2+ 69.Kb1 Rxh2 70.Rf3 b3 71.Rf8 Rg2, followed by ...h2, leads to the win.

### 4.3 Relativity

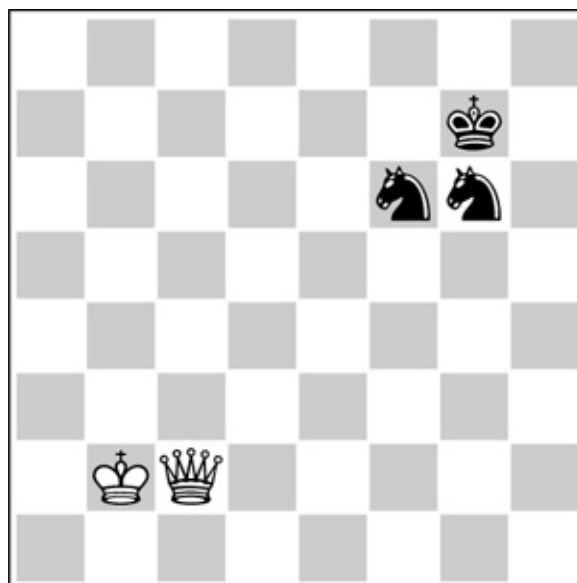
Sometimes chess can be very unfair. Haven't we seen too many positions where the side that has extra material cannot force the win, since the position is a theoretical draw? Which chess player doesn't know the case where a lone king is up against two knights that, however, cannot force the win without cooperation by the opposite side?

### Relativity example 01



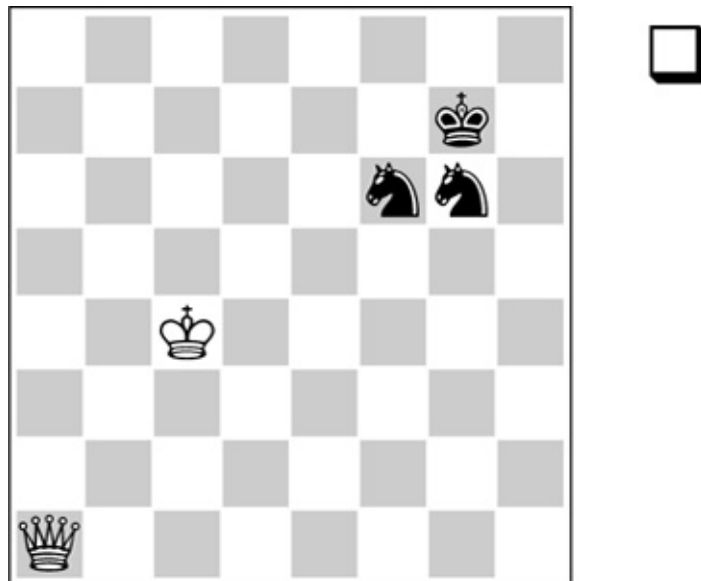
Equally unfair is the following case, where there is no win for the stronger side either.

### Relativity example 02a



Together the knights control a series of important squares, making it impossible for the enemy king to approach. Here also, the result of the game is a draw. These two cases once prompted grandmaster Jan Hein Donner to make the following joke: ‘Nowadays, a queen is worth nothing’, he said. ‘Put two knights on the opposite side; it doesn’t matter if you leave the queen on the board or take it off, the result will be the same: a draw. In short: a queen is worth nothing!’ By the way, you’d better be careful with those knights. In many cases the queen does win, as can be seen in the following fragment:

### Relativity example 02b



This is an exception to the fortress idea that we gave in the preceding diagram. There is one extraordinary way in which White can manage to break through the black fortress. The idea is to separate the knights from each other and force them to part ways. Botvinnik has taught us that two knights protecting each other only appear to be strong, but actually carry the seed of a loss. In the middlegame also, two knights protecting each other can be the cause of great trouble.

After the knights have been separated, the king and queen work together harmoniously to drive the black king from its ‘safe’ position. The ingenious winning method can be found with the help of Ken Thompson’s endgame CD or the Nalimov EGTB, as follows:

**1.Kc5 Kf7 2.Qa2+Ke7**

Thus, the black king leaves its ‘safe haven’. 2...Kg7 is the most natural move, but unfortunately this loses even more quickly than the strange move in the main line. I give the winning line on authority of the ‘tablebases’, with the optimal moves on both sides: 3.Qa7+ Kh6 4.Kd6 Ng4 5.Qa5 Nh4 6.Kd5 Nf6+ 7.Ke5

Nh7 8.Qc7 Ng6+ 9.Kf5 Nh4+ 10.Kg4 Ng6 11.Qb6 Nf8 12.Kf5 Kg7  
 13.Qa7+Kh6 14.Qd4 Kh5 15.Kf6 Nh7+ 16.Kg7 Nh8 17.Qg1 Ne6+ 18.Kf6  
 Ngf4 19.Qg3 Kh6 20.Qh4+, and White wins material.

**3.Kd4 Nf8 4.Ke5 N6d7+**

The knights have been forced to give up their harmonious formation, allowing White to break up the defence with a few complicated manoeuvres.

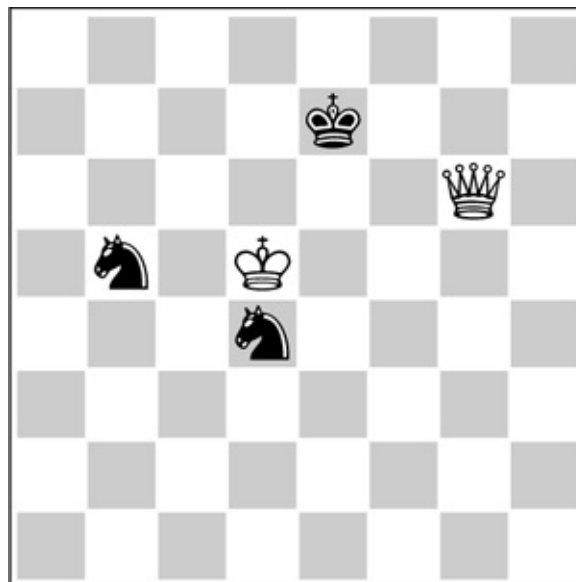
**5.Ke4 Ne6 6.Qa3+ Kf7 7.Qd6 Ndf8 8.Qd5 Kf6 9.Qc6 Ke7 10.Qb7+ Kd6  
 11.Qb6+ Ke7 12.Qb4+ Kf6 13.Qc3+ Ke7 14.Kf5**

Slowly but surely, Black's possibilities are reduced.

**14...Nd8 15.Qe1+ Nfe6 16.Qe3 Kd7 17.Kf6 Nc7 18.Qd2+ Kc8 19.Ke7 Nc6+  
 20.Kd6 Nd4**

Of course, the defender should always exploit knight forks! 21.Qxd4?? Nb5+.

**21.Qa5 Ncb5+ 22.Kd5 Kd7 23.Qb6 Ke7 24.Qg6**



**24...Ne2 25.Qe6+**

And White wins material.

By the way, once those two knights were the subject of a nice joke. In the following position, where Black cannot make any progress, Najdorf decided to end the game in a humoristic manner.

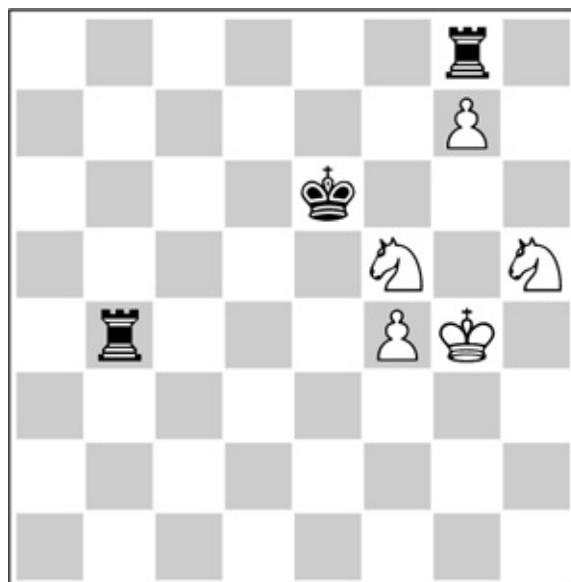
## GAME 7

□ **Kotov,Alexander**

■ **Najdorf,Miguel**

Zurich ct 1953 (27)





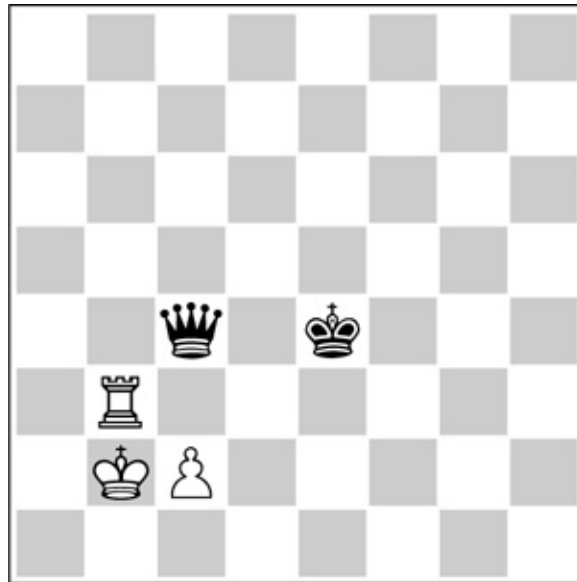
Here the Argentinian sacrificed both his rooks for both white pawns, in order to reach the notorious two knights ending:

**1...Rxf4+ 2.Kxf4 Rxf4 3.Nhxg7+**

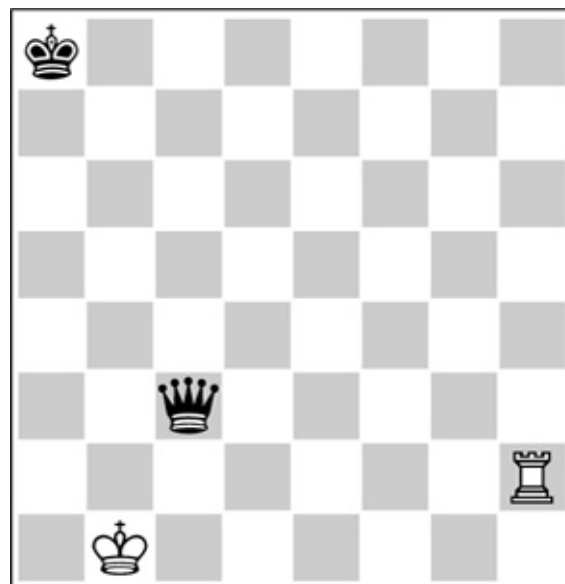
Still relishing his own witticism, Najdorf got a surprise when his opponent played on. Flabbergasted, the Argentinian asked why his opponent wanted to continue in this ‘theoretically drawn position’. ‘But don’t you know that someone in Tbilisi has finally found how this extremely difficult endgame can be won?’, the Russian replied with a deadpan expression. When the blood had drained from Najdorf’s face, Kotov laughed and offered a draw in his turn. This episode is described in Tim Krabbé’s book *New Chess Curiosities*.

It is useful to dwell for a little longer on a few theoretical cases where a (large) advantage in material is insufficient for the win.

### Relativity example 03



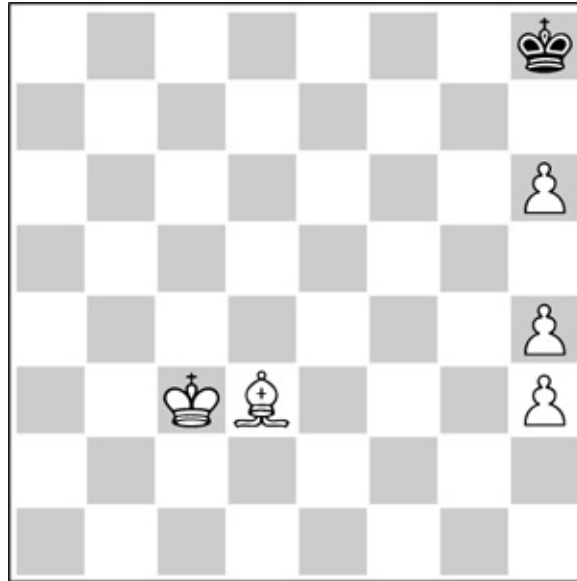
### Relativity example 04



Normally speaking, queen wins against rook, although the American grandmaster Walter Browne once did not manage this within the maximum of 50 moves, when playing against a computer program. Thanks to a 'coincidence', in the diagram position, White can force a draw, starting with 1.Ra2+. The white rook then keeps pursuing the black king from the squares a2 and b2, since it is impossible to escape via the c-file under penalty of losing his queen after Rc2. The fact that the black queen is unfortunately positioned allows White to escape by the skin of his teeth.

**1.Ra2+ Kb7 2.Rb2+ Ka6 3.Ra2+ Kb5 4.Rb2+ Ka4 5.Ra2+ Kb3 6.Ra3!+ ½-½**

## Relativity example 05



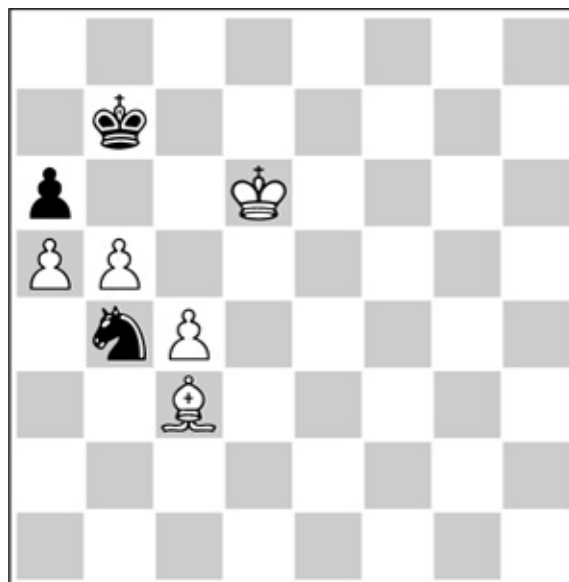
Now for a practical example.

### GAME 8

□ De Vreugt, Dennis

■ Grooten, Herman

Hilversum 2006 (1)



Black faces the tough task of combating a bishop and three connected pawns with a knight and one pawn. His only chance of salvation lies in the fact that

White possesses the bishop of the wrong colour.

**76...axb5**

After 77.Bxb4 bxc4, White would have to settle for a draw.

**77.cxb5 Na6!**

Thus Black exploits the circumstance that White has the bishop of the wrong colour. Furthermore, he now threatens to lure the pawn to b6 with ...Nc7.

**78.b6**

Sooner or later this push would have been inevitable.

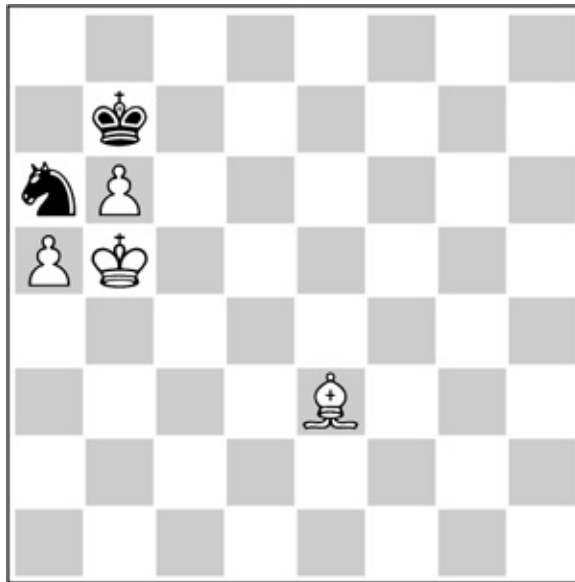
**78...Nb8**

The knight would like to reach the squares c8 and a7.

**79.Bd4 Na6 80.Be3 Nb8 81.Kc5?!**

The first hesitation, which indicates that the white player, in the time-scramble at the end of the game, does not see how he can carry off the palm. As we will see shortly, there is still a way to win for White.

**81...Na6+82.Kb5**

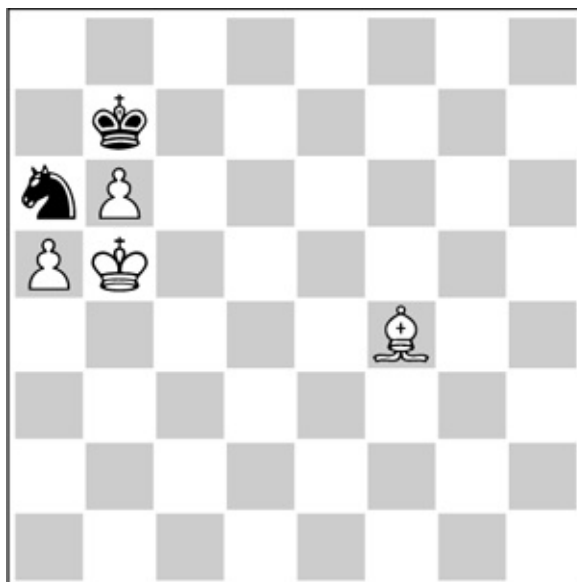


**82...Nc7+!**

White had not foreseen this remarkable little check, and now he lost the thread.

**83.Kc4?!**

It was not yet too late to retrace his footsteps. White could still have gained the full point in an instructive manner: 83.Kc5 Na6+ 84.Kd6 Nb8 85.Bf2! (a tempo move, to keep the b6 pawn protected a little longer. This also prevents 85...Nc6 on account of 86.a6+!) 85...Na6 86.Bg3! (now the moment has come to change diagonals) 86...Nb4 (playing the knight to and fro between b8 and a6 is now rendered impossible in view of 86...Nb8 87.Kc5 Na6+ 88.Kb5, and now after 88...Ka8 White wins with 89.Bf4 Kb7



Analysis diagram

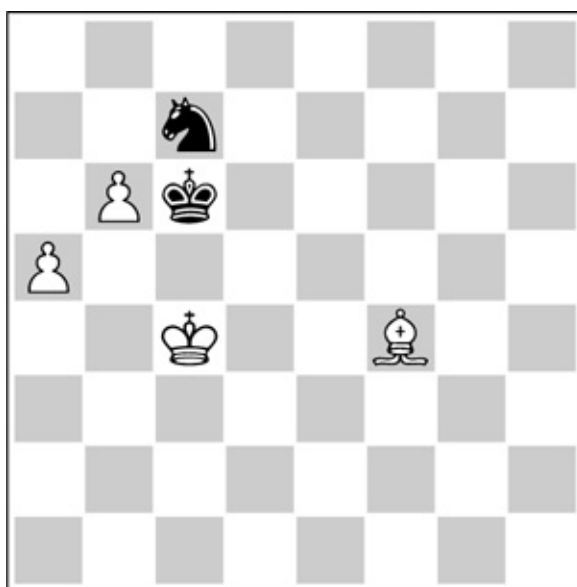
90.Bd6! Ka8 91.Kc6, and Black runs out of moves) 87.Kc5 Nc2 88.Bf2, and the knight is sidetracked.

**83...Kc6!**

In this way, Black conquers new territory, and the danger of losing has passed.

**84.Bf4**

84.Bf2 was a better chance, but after 84...Na6 85.Bg3 Nc5 86.Be5 Na6 87.Bd4 Nc7 White cannot make progress.



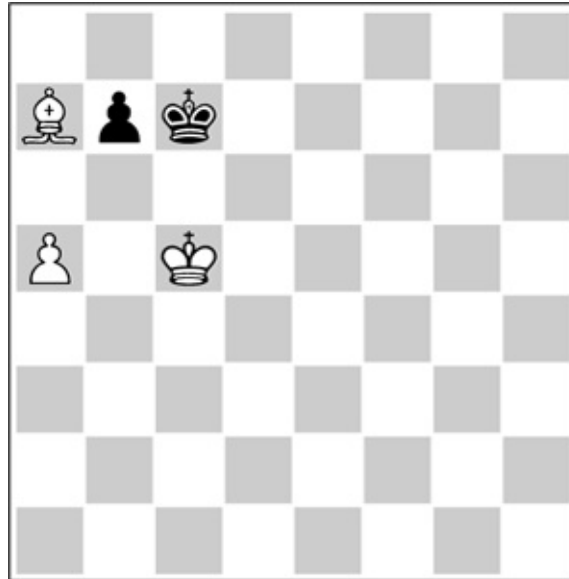
**84...Nd5!**

Now, after a bishop move on the diagonal, Black takes on b6.

**85.b7 Kxb7 86.Kxd5 Ka8**

A Herculean drawing effort!

### Relativity example 06



The problems in this position seem to be related to those of the previous position. Again there is a wrong-coloured bishop, but here the black king has not reached the corner yet. However, Black has an elegant construction at his disposal, which allows him to emerge with a half point from this precarious situation after all:

**1...b6+!**

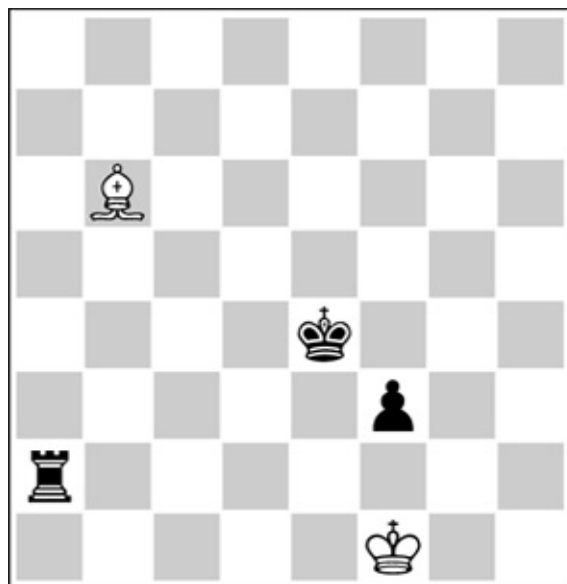
Clearing the passage to the corner for his king. We have already seen that 2.Bxb6+ Kb7, followed by 3...Ka8, is a draw. But it is not so easy to see that after

**2.axb6+ Kb7**

White has nothing left to play for either. The unfortunate bishop is boxed in and because of the stalemate trap 3.Kd6 Ka8 4.Kc6, the white king cannot come closer. Finally, the bishop sacrifice 3.Bb8 Kxb8 4.Kc6 Kc8 does not win either. An amazing story!

It's crystal-clear that in most cases a rook is stronger than a bishop. We know that the rook almost never beats a bishop when there are no other pieces or pawns on the board, but with one pawn added the win should not be a problem. The following position is an exception.

### Relativity example 07



The bishop has firm control of the a7-g1 diagonal, not allowing the black king to get to the e3-square, and if the latter goes to g3 it will be harassed by a check 'in the back'. It is essential that after

**1.Bc5 f2**

White defends with

**2.Kg2!**

After 2.Bxf2? Kf3 3.Be1 Ra1 White would have to cash in his chips after all, but after the text move the black pawn is marked for death. He can try

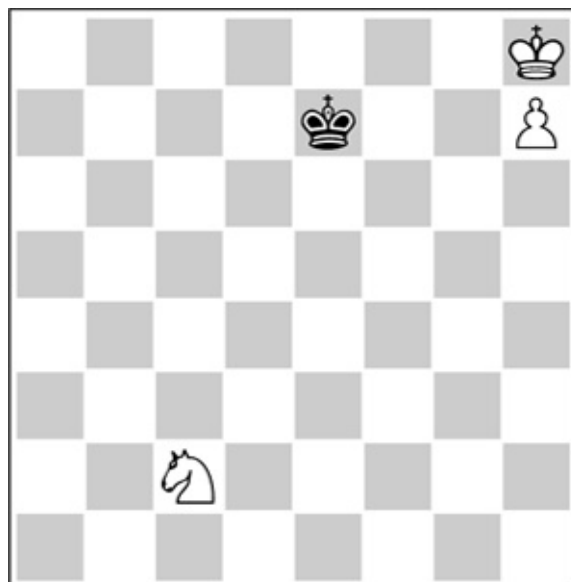
**2...f1Q+**

but with correct play this will not bring him success. For example:

**3.Kxf1 Kf3 4.Kg1 Kg3 5.Bd6+**

with a draw.

**Relativity example 08**



In this diagram position, the material deficit is also considerable, but the white king is in the way of its pawn. So Black must keep it imprisoned in the corner. But which square should he choose? Indeed – the square of the same colour that the white knight is on: f7!

**1...Kf7!**

Now it's a draw, since a knight cannot 'triangulate', i.e., it cannot lose a tempo to give the move to the opponent.

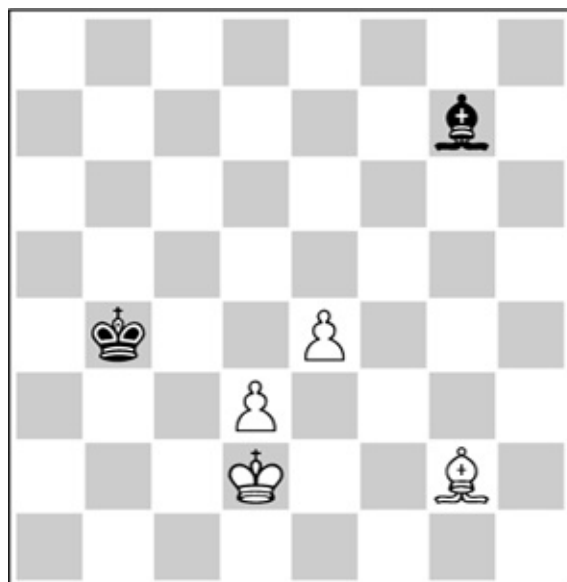
After the alternative 1...Kf8 Black would lose, for instance: 2.Ne3 Kf7 3.Ng4 Kf8 4.Ne5 and the black king is driven away from the corner.

**2.Nd4 Kf8 3.Ne6+ Kf7 4.Ng5+ Kf8**

White cannot make progress. Here we can see the difference between human thinking and calculation by strong computer programs. Fritz 11 gives +- (6.10) in this position and Rybka 2.4 32-bit awards +- (5.12). (Rybka 2.1 gives 3.62.)

**Relativity example 09**





Two pawns down, but opposite-coloured bishops on the board. This factor has the habit of saving the defending side again and again. Here the white pawns are unfortunately placed. White cannot break the blockade on the dark squares. It is essential that the white d-pawn does not cross the d4-square. After

**1.Ke3**

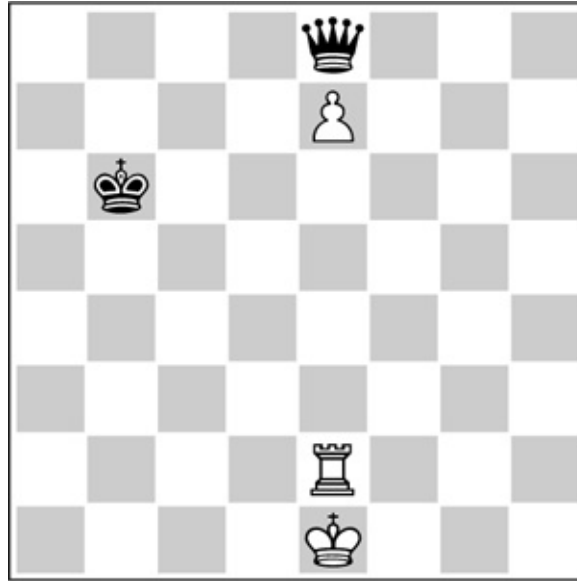
Black replies

**1...Kc5**

Maintaining the blockade on the dark squares. Even a white king march to f5 will not help. The black king follows suit, ending up on the d6-square and keeping the dark squares under control.

**2.Kf4 Kd6**  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

**Relativity example 10**



This position illustrates once more that a rook belongs behind its passed pawn. This makes the pawn so strong that Black cannot use either his queen or his king. And only when these two pieces cooperate will Black have any chances to win this endgame.

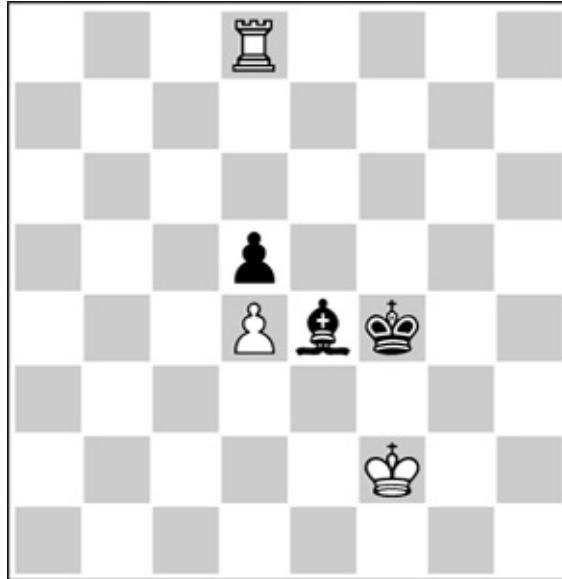
In the diagram position the black king can walk to e8, after which the queen is free to move. But if the queen leaves her post, the king is tied hand and foot to the promotion square. Without help of the king, Black has no winning chances. And White does not even have to allow this. He can leave his king on e1 so that the queen has no check, and play his rook to and fro on e2 and e3. Then if the queen leaves e8, he plays e7-e8Q(+).

Therefore: a draw.

In the following exercises you can dabble further with 'schematic thinking'.

## Exercises

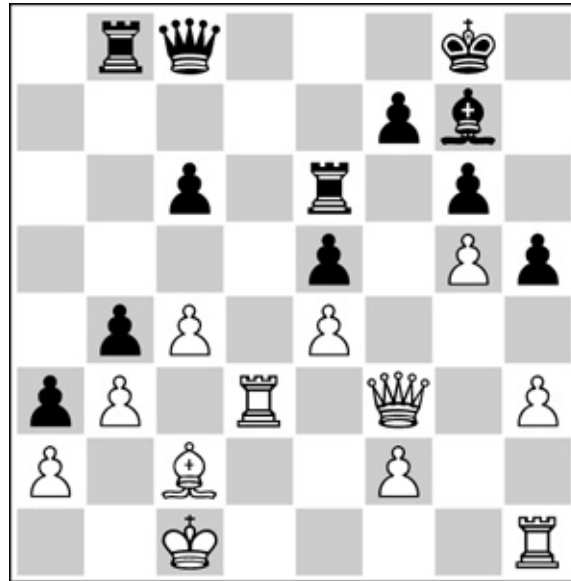
4.1



How can White convert his material plus? Try to express in words what the correct plan is for White.

[Solution](#)

4.2



Who do you think is better here? Indicate on which features you have based your verdict and formulate a plan that is related to those features.

[Solution](#)

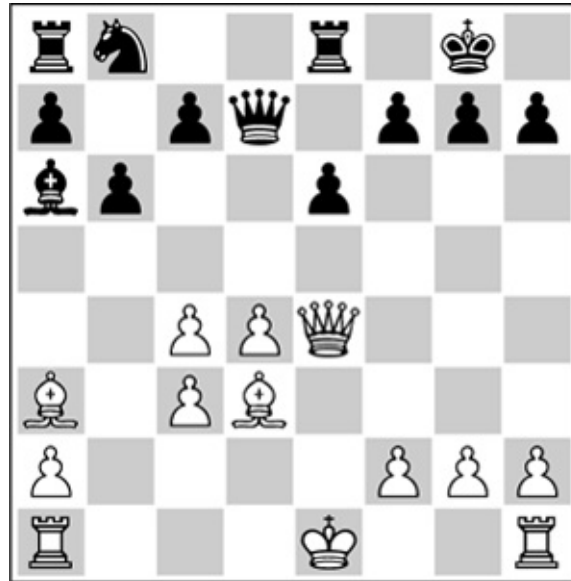
4.3



With this position you can practice schematic thinking. White possesses a good knight versus a bad bishop. Three pawns have been fixed on the colour of the bishop, and this is enough for White to win. Work out step by step what White must do in order to force the win.

[Solution](#)

4.4



In this position Black is planning to continue with 13...f5, consciously going for a liquidation where he exchanges two rooks for a queen. Assess the position after **13...f5 14.Qxa8 Nc6 15.Qxe8+ Qxe8** and make a list of the plusses and minuses for both sides.

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 5

# Weakened king position

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose in chess is to give mate to the enemy king. This is a truism, but it is less obvious that this goal is sometimes closer at hand than we would expect. In the previous chapter we saw an example from the Romantic Era, when chess players went for the enemy king's throat from move one. In this example we could see that the king may become a target already in the early middlegame if it lacks sufficient protection. For grandmasters, the safety of their king is an important factor. Sometimes a player is forced to allow a weakening of his king position with an unfavourable exchange. In other cases, the weakening can be forced by an (unexpected) piece sacrifice.

In this chapter we will look at various examples where the opponent's king is exposed to an attack by enemy pieces, caused by the destruction of its protective cordon for one reason or another. In all these cases we witness the same process: a breach is made in the defensive wall that the king has put up in front of itself. We can compare it to a medieval castle where a hole is made in the wall with a battering-ram. As soon as the passage is created, the attackers storm in through the hole and try to take possession of the area behind it. Chess isn't any different. With a sacrifice a breach is made in the protective pawn cordon, and as a consequence your pieces can enter through the hole and obtain free play against the unfortunate enemy monarch.

To keep things clear, we will make a division. In 5.2 we will discuss the king in the centre of the board; and in 5.3 the castled king will be dealt with.

In practice, a king in the centre will generally be an easier target for the enemy pieces than a castled king. However, in these sections we will discuss castled positions where the holes are already clearly visible.

### 5.2 King in the centre

The player who neglects the development of his pieces will not infrequently get into trouble with his king. After all, the preparation of castling, bringing the king into (temporary) safety, is an essential part of development. Therefore it is not so surprising that such underdeveloped positions can be forced open by violent means.

The following fragments are characteristic illustrations of this theory.

□ **MacKenzie**

■ **NN**

Date/year unknown



Despite his material advantage, Black has great problems. His pieces do not coordinate and his king is stuck in a draughty centre.

**1.Rxe5+! dxe5 2.Qxe5+ Be7**

2...Qxe5 is met by 3.Bc6+ Rxc6 4.Rd8#. Of course, 2...Kd7 will end badly for Black as well, since his king is in the line of fire of virtually all of White's pieces: 3.Qf5+ Ke8 4.Bxf7+ Qxf7 5.Qxc8# is the most accurate winning line.

**3.Bc6+!**

With this 'diversion' White forces the mate.

**3...Kf8**

Or 3...Qxc6 4.Qxe7#.

**4.Qxh8#**

**1-0**

Of Bobby Fischer we know that he had great admiration for his compatriot Paul Morphy's play. The efficiency and the logic with which Morphy took on many of his opponents appealed to his imagination. If we compare Morphy's game from the previous chapter with the following fragment, we discover several striking similarities.



☐ Fischer, Robert

■ Najdorf, Miguel

Varna Olympiad 1962 (2)



White has a substantial advantage in development. Since the black king is still in the centre, the following exchange sacrifice (analogous to several games by Morphy) is fully justified.

**1.Rxe4! dxe4 2.Nf5**

Better than 2.Qb3, which gives Black chances of survival after 2...Qb6 3.Bxf7+ Kd8.

**2...Bc5**



### 3.Ng7+

Quite instructive! The purpose of this move is solely to make castling impossible for Black, and then to continue the attack with renewed vigour.

### 3...Ke7

Now, 3...Kf8 is worse in view of 4.Bh6 Kg8, and with the elegant queen switch 5.Qb3 Qf8 6.Nf5, followed by Qg3+, White immediately decides the game in his favour.

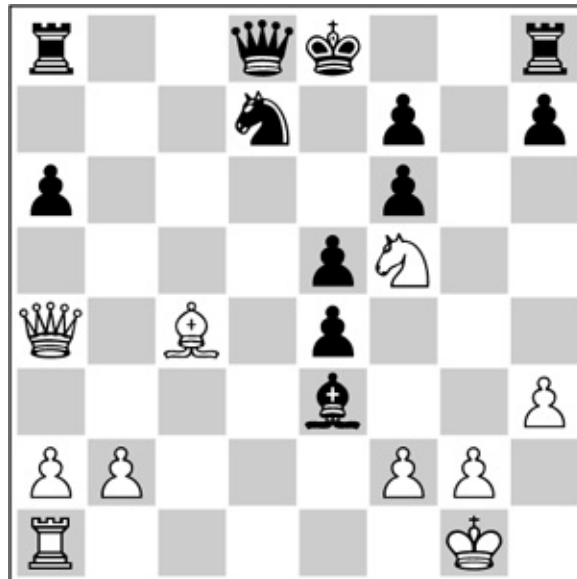
### 4.Nf5+ Ke8

Now White must think of a way to breathe new life into his attack. Of course, he begins by activating as quickly as possible his two pieces that are still on their original squares.

### 5.Be3

This move has the important secondary aim of trading off Black's active bishop.

### 5...Bxe3



### 6.fxe3!

Active pieces are best left where they are. We can also learn this from Morphy, who was always aiming to increase the activity of his pieces. The knight is very dominant on f5. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops creates the threat of Nd6+.

### 6...Qb6 7.Rd1

Now White's last piece has been activated. Incidentally, here 7.Bxf7+ would also have sufficed to reach a winning position, for example: 7...Kd8 8.Rd1 Ra7 9.Qa3!, and not only is the black king particularly unsafe, his pieces do not cooperate either.

### 7...Ra7 8.Rd6 Qd8

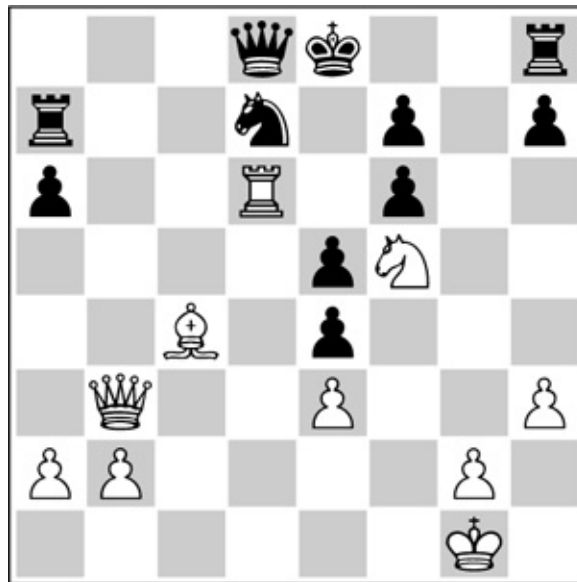
The best defence under the circumstances, although Black is already fighting a losing battle.

Things would have gone terribly wrong after 8...Qxb2 9.Bxf7+:

A) If Black chooses 9...Kd8 here, analogously to what happens further on in the game, he will be immediately taken out with 10.Qa5+! Kc8 (10...Rc7 also leads to disaster after 11.Be6 Qb5 12.Rxd7+ Qxd7 13.Bxd7 Kxd7 14.Qd5+) 11.Ne7+ Kb8 12.Nc6+, and the roof comes crashing down;

B) 9...Kxf7 would bring about an elegant conclusion: 10.Rxd7+ Rxd7 11.Qxd7+ Kg6 12.Qg7+ Kxf5 13.Qg4#.

**9.Qb3**



**9...Qc7**

Nothing can save Black, for instance: 9...Rf8 10.Ng7+Ke7 11.Qa3.



Analysis diagram

With the terrible threat of 12.Re6 mate, or another deadly discovered check.

**10.Bxf7+ Kd8**

After 10...Kf8 11.Bh5, mate is inevitable. An elegant line is 11...Nb6 12.Qf7+! Qxf7 13.Rd8+Qe8 14.Rxe8#.

**11.Be6**

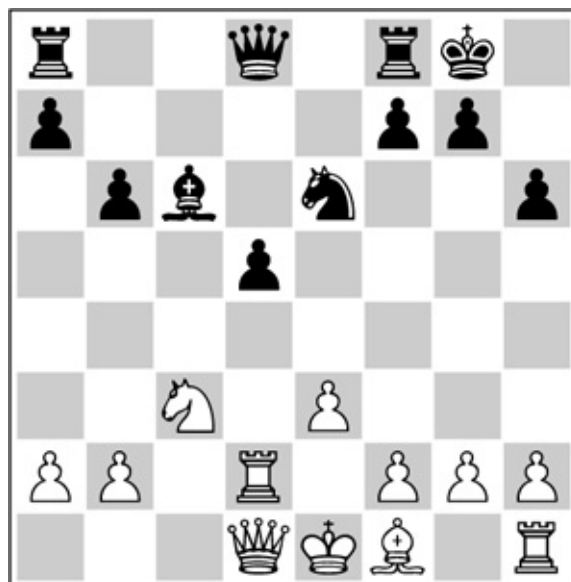
Black resigns, since the pin will be his undoing. A possible continuation is: 11...Rb7 12.Qd5 Qc8 13.Qa5+ Ke8 14.Rxa6, and the many threats are too much for Black to handle.

There has been another World Champion who knew a thing or two about driving the enemy king into a tight corner.

□ **Magerramov,Elmar**

■ **Kasparov,Garry**

Baku 1977



At first sight, White is not doing so badly. Black has an isolated pawn on d5 that needs support, and besides, the black pieces do not seem to radiate much activity. But this is a very static way of looking at the position. The dynamic factors speak in Black's favour. In particular, there is the fact that the white king is still in the middle, and he also still has to develop his bishop. These factors turn out to be of overriding importance. Kasparov does not hesitate to make a promising pawn sacrifice.

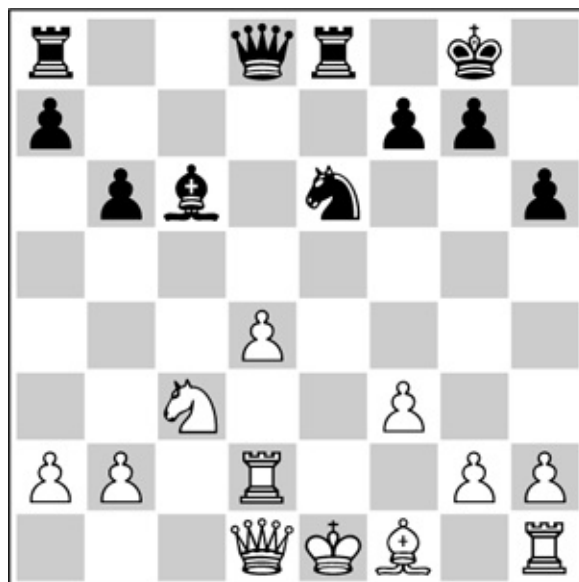
**1...d4!? 2.exd4**

Also after 2.Ne2 things will go wrong for White, as the following variation illustrates: 2.Ne2 Qg5 3.Nxd4 Nxd4 4.Rxd4 Rad 8, and Black has taken over the initiative.

**2...Re8 3.f3**

White acts dumb, but already his problems are enormous. For instance, he cannot develop smoothly: 3.Be2 Bxg2, and the principled 3.d5 fails to 3...Nf4+ 4.Be2 (neither does 4.Re2 help after 4...Nxd5!) 4...Nxg2+ 5.Kf1 Bd7!, after which Black's attack has taken on decisive proportions already, for example: 6.Kxg2? Qg5+ 7.Kf1 Bh3+ 8.Ke1 Qg2, winning.

Playing the text move, White is not afraid of a discovered check by the knight, and neither does he fear 3...Qh4+?! 4.g3 Qf6 5.Kf2, after which he will be more or less OK. But he is in for a nasty surprise.



### 3...Bxf3!

An unexpected and quite unusual piece sacrifice. As we have also seen in earlier examples, the attacker by force removes a piece from the protective cordon around the enemy king, making it possible for his remaining pieces to besiege the latter. The hiding-place on f2 that White had in mind becomes extremely draughty after the text move. The following moves are more or less forced.

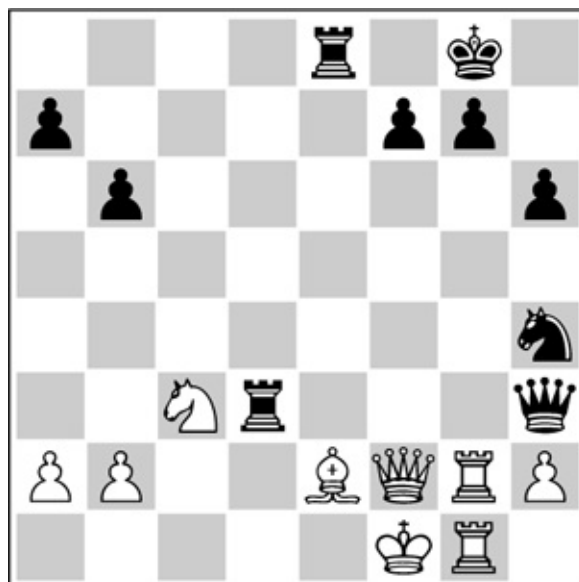
### 4.gxf3 Qh4+ 5.Rf2 Nxd4+ 6.Be2 Nxf3+ 7.Kf1 Qh3+ 8.Rg2 Nh4?!

Remarkably enough, Kasparov misses the best continuation of the attack. The 13th World Champion was famous for his ability to add force to his attacks by optimally involving all his pieces. He should have done that here with 8...Rad8! 9.Qc1 Nd2+ 10.Kg1 Qe3+ 11.Rf2 Rd6, and the threat of ...Rg6 is lethal.

### 9.Rg1 Rad8 10.Qe1?

White collapses under the continuous pressure. The only chance of salvation was offered by 10.Qa4!, as Kasparov has indicated himself, but also in that case Black would have had splendid winning chances by 10...Nxd2 11.Rxd2 Re5 (11...Qe3 also looks very promising for Black) 12.Qg4 Qxg4 13.Bxg4f5 14.Bf3g5.

### 10...Rd3! 11.Qf2



**11...Nf3!**

White's pieces find themselves in a kind of positional zugzwang.

**12.Rh1**

After 12.Bxd3, 12...Nxb2 is mate. 12.Nd5 is met by the elegant 12...Rd1+ 13.Bxd1 Nxb2#; and 12.Qg3 does not allow White to hold after 12...Nd2+ 13.Ke1 Rxb3 14.Rxb3 Nf3+ 15.Kf2 Nxb3.

**12...Ree3**

12...Rde3 was even more powerful.

**13.Rg1 Kh8 14.Rh1 b5**

**0-1**

A pretty final move. The white knight cannot avoid being driven away, as 15.a3 is met by 15...a5 and 16...b4, after which the threat of 17...Rxe2 decides the game.

### 5.3 The castled king

In this section we will look at various castled positions that are either seriously weakened or wrenched out of joint by a characteristic sacrifice. In the mating attack that follows, the attacker disposes of various tactical means, which are instructive to watch. Again we divide the material:

#### \* Already weakened

If in a king position the pawns are not aligned neatly before the king like a protective layer, we speak of a weakened position. The lack of a natural defensive structure allows the enemy pieces to attack the king.

We can distinguish a well-known type of combination in the following position.

□ Fischer, Robert

■ Benko, Paul

New York ch-USA 1963 (10)



Obviously, the weak point in Black's king position is h7. However, in the event that White opens the d3-h7 diagonal with 1.e5, Black has planned a nice response: 1...f5!, when White has no time to take this pawn en passant, since his queen is hanging. In order to prevent this defence, Fischer came up with an elegant move:

**1.Rf6!**

This combination is known in chess literature as a blockading sacrifice.

**1...Kg8**

Black cannot take the rook under penalty of immediate mate (1...Bxf6 2.e5), while the rook is doing a good job on the f6-square.

**2.e5h6 3.Ne2!**

**1-0**

The most precise move. White saves his knight, while threatening both 4.Rxd6 and 4.Rxh6. By the way, the black knight cannot budge in view of 4.Qf5, with inevitable mate.

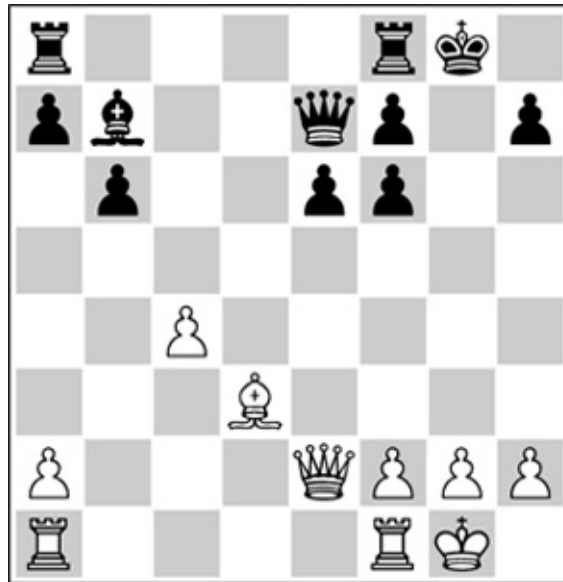
### **\* Weakening by means of a sacrifice**

In order to dismantle the 'natural protective cordon' described above, now and then violent means need to be applied. This almost invariably involves a combination with a more or less forced character. The sacrifices must be accepted, as otherwise the opposite side is left with a second defect in his position. The following case is quite instructive.



### Fragment 01 / Pin

The following classic combination is thematic and, as such, has been featured in various books. Here I will give just one version.



Black's king position contains a gaping hole, but this doesn't seem to be such a problem, since White does not have many pieces in the attack and Black can defend with the simple ...Kh8 followed by ...Rg8 and ...Rg7. Still, the position contains a slightly hidden combinational motif, allowing White to emerge victorious:

**1.Qg4+ Kh8 2.Qh4**

The point becomes clear. The typical defence 2...f5 is now impossible, since the black queen is unprotected. By playing the queen to h4, White introduces a pin that guarantees him the win.

### Fragment 02 / Bxh7

This bishop sacrifice is seen frequently. In the example given below we see that the pawn on h4 is essential, but there are also other factors that may work in White's favour. A further investigation of those lies outside the scope of this book.



The diagram position contains all the ingredients required for a successful raid on the black king. Essential pieces are the pawn on e5, which has driven the black knight away from the defence, and also the pawn on h4, which allows the h1 rook to join the attack.

**1.Bxh7+! Kxh7 2.Ng5+**

After 2...Kh6, 3.Nxe6+ wins, and after 2...Kg6 3.h5+ Kf5 (3...Kh6 is again met by 4.Nxe6+) 4.g4+, mate is next. The defence with 2...Bxg5 transposes to our main line.

**2...Kg8 3.Qh5 Bxg5 4.hxg5**

The h-file has been opened.

**4...f6 5.g6**

**1-0**

### Fragment 03 / Searchlight

If you are asked on which square in the diagram position you want to put a bishop, the answer does not seem difficult.



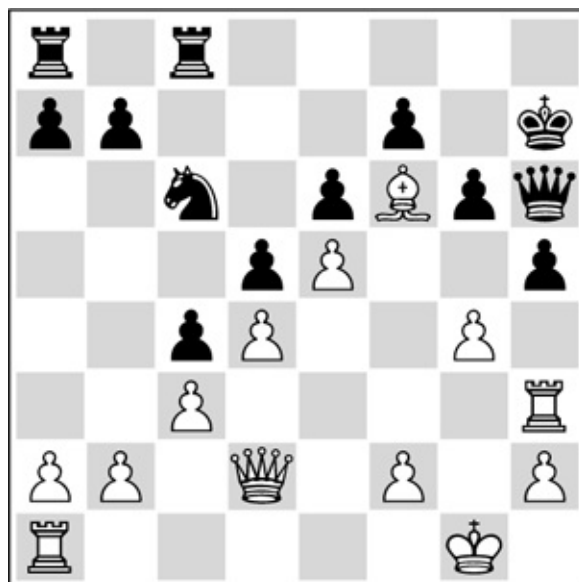
If you have chosen the f6-square, you've hit the bull's eye! From this square the bishop 'shines' like a searchlight through the black king position, and mating patterns start to suggest themselves. Black has the following defensive methods at his disposal:



- A) Pawn moves like 1...h6 or 1...h5, in order to keep the enemy queen from h6 with...Kh7;
- B) Bring in reinforcements with ...Qe8 or ...Be7;
- C) Run for it with the king. This is the most tenacious defence, but first we must further investigate the other two defensive measures.

A1) 1...h6 2.Qd2 (2.Re3, with the idea Rh3, is also possible) 2...Kh7 3.Re3 Ne7 4.Rh3 Ng8 5.g4! and now the threat of 6.Qxh6+! Nxb6 7.g5 followed by 8.Rxb6 and 9.Rh8# becomes pressing. After 5...Qe8 6.Bg5 Qf8 7.Bxb6 Nxb6 8.g5, White also has a huge advantage;

A2) 1...h5 2.Qd2 (also good is 2.g4 Ne7 3.Qd2 Kh7 4.Qg5 Ng8 5.gxh5 and White breaks through) 2...Kh7 3.Re3 Qe8 (or 3...Ne7 4.Rh3 Nf5 5.g4 Ng7 6.Qg5!) 4.Rh3 Qf8 5.g4 Qh6



Analysis diagram

6.g5! (remarkably enough, White can permit himself this voluntary imprisonment of his bishop) 6...Qf8 7.Rxh5+! (the point of the previous move) 7...gxh5 8.Qe2, and in order to avoid mate Black must give up his queen.

B) 1...Qe8 2.Re3 and now:

B1) 2...Qf8 3.Rh3 h6 (3...Ne7 also doesn't help: 4.Qd2 Rc7 5.g4, and Black is powerless against the threat of 6.Qg5, 7.Rh6 and 8.Qh4) 4.Qd2 Kh7 5.g4 b5 6.Bg5, and again the defensive wall has been breached;

B2) 2...Nb8!?. This discovery forces White to play accurately. The knight aims for d7, from where it can question the strong bishop on f6: 3.Rh3 Nd7 4.Qg4 Qf8 5.Qg5 a5 6.Re1 Ra6 7.Rh6 Nxf6 8.exf6, and again there is no remedy to the threat of Qh4. The pawn on f6 more or less takes over the function of the bishop.

**1...Kf8**

Running away from the danger zone with the king can be a useful idea.

**2.Qd2 Ke8 3.Qh6 Ne7**

The other defensive ploy 3...Nd8 does not save Black either: 4.Qxh7 Qc7 (or 4...Qa4 5.Qg8+ Kd7 6.Qf8, and Black cannot cope with all the threats anymore) 5.Re3, and here White can choose between various winning methods.

**4.Qxh7Qd8**

4...Qa4 5.Re3 (White must also bring in reinforcements in order to make progress. He now aims at the weak point f7) 5...Qc2 6.Rf3 Qxb2 7.Re1 Qa3 8.Bg5, and the weak point f7 will be Black's undoing, for example: 8...Nf5 9.g4.

## 5.Re3!

Once more, White takes aim at the weakest point in the enemy position: pawn f7. This is nicely in keeping with Steinitz's theory, which points out that, when searching for the right attacking plan, you should make the weakest point in the enemy position your main target. Black will not be able to deal with the coming attack on his Achilles' heel.

**5...Rc7 6.Rf3 Qc8 7.g4**

Followed by Bg5, after which the pawn on f7 will soon fall. (This position is taken from Vladimir Vukovic's book *Der Rochade-Angriff*.)

A very special combination is the so-called ‘magnet combination’. Its essence is that the enemy king is ‘drawn out’ of its stronghold by a series of sacrifices, and becomes an easy prey for the opponent’s remaining pieces. For a good magnet combination it is essential that the defender is obliged to accept the sacrifices.

**□ Fischer,Robert**

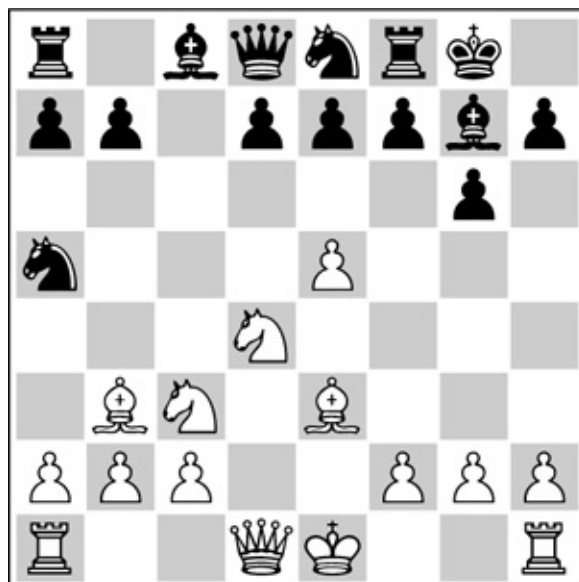
■ Reshevsky, Samuel

New York ch-USA 1958 (6)

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.Be3 Nf6 6.Nc3 Bg7 7.Bc4 0-0 8.Bb3 Na5?**

This knight is badly misplaced here, as will soon become apparent.

**9.e5 Ne8**



### 10.Bxf7+!

Here is the combination we mentioned earlier. It is based on the unprotected position of the black queen. Black must take, in view of the threat 11.Ne6.

### 10...Kxf7

10...Rxf7 would not help either after 11.Ne6.

### 11.Ne6!

This is the actual magnet move. If the king takes, it will be drawn further into the open with 12.Qd5+ Kf5, and soon end up in a mating net: 13.g4+! Kxg4 14.Rg1+ Kh5 15.Qg2e6 16.Qg4#.

These variations highlight the unfortunate position of Black's knight on a5 : it deprives its queen of an escape square. Reshevsky could have resigned after

### 11...dxe6 12.Qxd8

but played on in this lost position until move 42 before throwing in the towel.

One of the prettiest and also most famous examples of a magnet combination can be seen in the following fragment:

□ **Lasker,Edward**

■ **Thomas,George**

London 1912



The black player, Sir George Thomas, has just fallen for a terrible trap with ... Qd8-e7??, making possible the following combination, which has gone down in history as one of the most beautiful magnet combinations of all time.

**1.Qxh7+!!**

A totally unexpected queen sacrifice. Clearly Black would have saved himself after 1.Nxf6+ with 2...gxf6.

**1...Kxh7 2.Nxf6+ Kh6**

2...Kh8 3.Ng6 is another pretty mate with two knights.

**3.Neg4+**

The right knight, as White wants to keep square h5 protected.

**3...Kg5 4.h4+ Kf4 5.g3+ Kf3**

The black king is thrown to the wolves.



### 6.Be2+

There have been nitpickers who have indicated that White had a quicker win with 6.O-O!, after which the threat of 7.Nh2# cannot be parried. Analogously, 6.Rg1, with the same threat, would also have secured the point, even though Black could then prolong the struggle with the spite check 6...Qxb4+.

### 6...Kg2 7.Rh2+ Kg1 8.Kd2#

1-0

The above-mentioned nitpickers would also remark that here 8.O-O-O# would have made this game immortal.

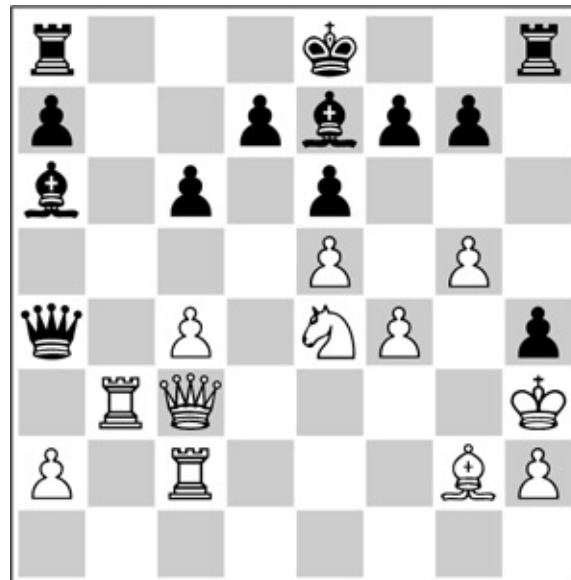
Now we will have a look at a number of frequent tricks to smoke out the enemy king. It's best to look for the combination yourself before you look at the solution.

What happens if Black castles kingside?

□ Kasparov, Garry

■ Illescas Cordoba, Miguel

Linares 1992 (10)



A tense position, where the strange placement of Whites king stands out. It appears to be unsafe on h3, but that is not at all the case. The black pieces don't cooperate, mainly due to White's strong central position.

Illescas wants finally to get round to connecting his rooks and decides in favour of kingside castling. :

### 1...0-0?

You can guess Kasparov's reply. He immediately jumps at the opportunity.



## 2.Nf6+!

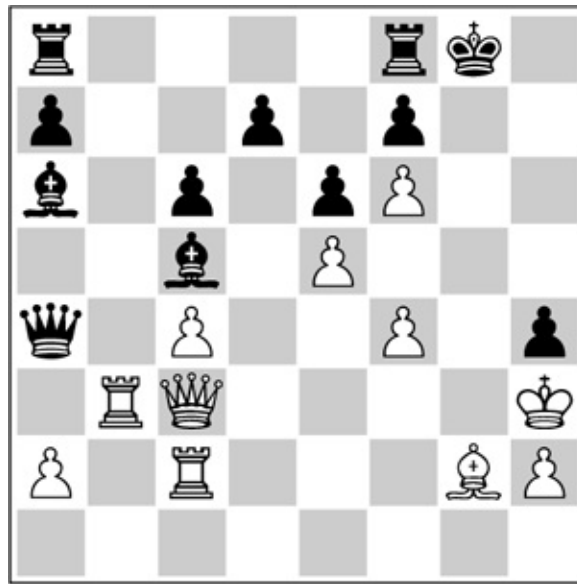
With this move White tears the black kingside apart, obtaining a dangerous attack against the enemy king. Since Black's pieces can hardly intervene, it is not surprising that the attack will be successful.

In his comments in Yearbook 25, Kasparov indicates that the strategic 2.Nd6! might have been even better. After 2...Bxd6 3.exd6, the black pieces have no elbow room, and especially the position of his queen is a huge problem. White would have been able to win 'with his eyes closed'. Now he still has to calculate accurately.

## 2...gxf6

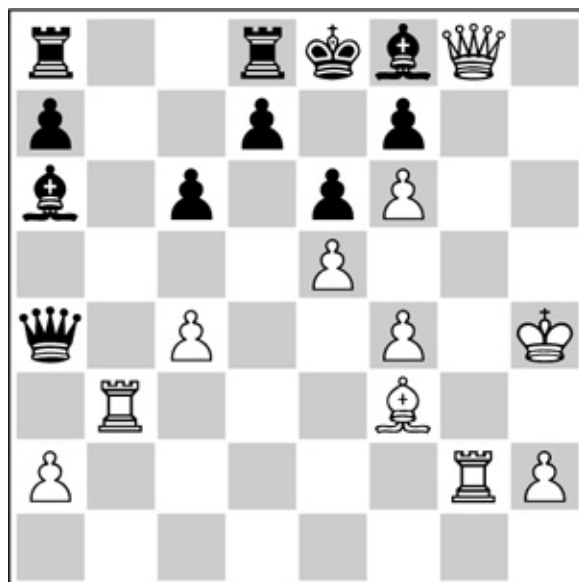
2...Bxf6 3.gxf6 Rfb8 4.Ra3 Qxc4.

## 3.gxf6 Bc5



## 4.Be4?!

Remarkably enough, Kasparov's follow-up is not optimal. With 4.Kxh4! White could have cleared a square for his queen on g3, with an immediate mate threat: 4...Rfb8 (the other rook move doesn't help either: 4...Rfd8 5.Qg3+ Kf8, and now White continues with the subtle 6.Bf3! Ke8 7.Qg8+ Bf8 8.Rg2



Analysis diagram

with the magnificent threat of 9.Qxf7+, followed by 10.Bh5#, which cannot be parried) 5.Qg3+ Kf8 6.Rd2! (Instructive. 6.Qg7+? would be premature on account of 6...Ke8 7.Qg8+ Bf8, and Black has survived the worst).

A) Now 6...Ke8 would fail to the brilliant combination 7.Qg8+ Bf8 8.Rxd7! Kxd7 9.Qxf7+ Kc8 10.Qxf8+ Kc7 11.Qe7+ Kc8 12.Qxe6+ Kc7 13.Qe7+ Kc8 14.Bh3#;

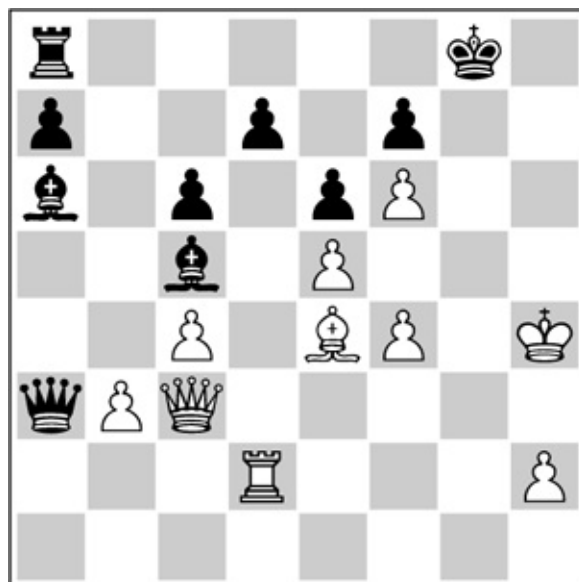
B) 6...Bc8 7.Rd6! (another severe blow which drastically prevents the defence with ...Bf8) 7...Bxd6 8.exd6 Qxc4 9.Qg7+Ke8 10.Qg8#.

#### **4...Rf b8 5.Kxh4**

The white king now does put its oar into the attack. The pawn on h4 is removed so as to make the square g3 accessible for the white queen.

#### **5...Kf8**

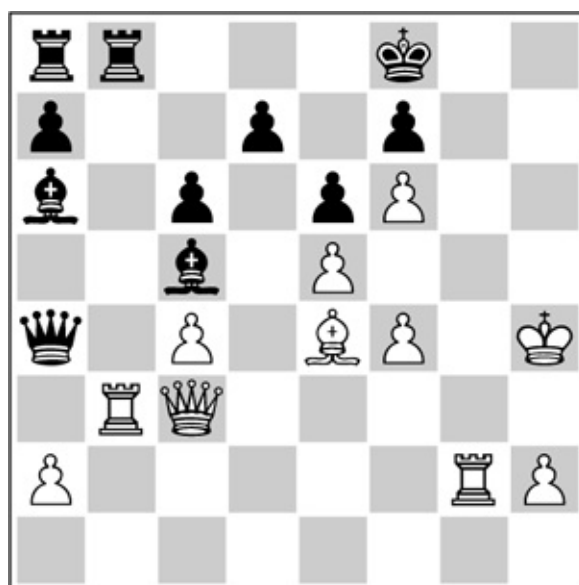
After 5...Rxb3, White rounds off as follows: 6.axb3 Qa3 7.Rd2!.



Analysis diagram

The rook is threatening to invade via the d-file; the queen threatens to do so via the g-file. Now, 7...Bc8 will fail to 8.Qg3+ Kf8 9.f5! exf5. Black has to take on f5, since he cannot allow fxe6, but now there follows the fantastic 10.e6! fxe6 11.Qg7+ Ke8 12.Bxc6, and there is no defence against the mate threats.

**6.Rg2**



**6...Qxc4**

Black misses his best saving chance: 6...Rxb3 7.axb3 Qa3 8.Qg3 Ke8, and it looks as if Black has weathered the storm, but a nasty surprise awaits him also here: 9.Qg8+ Bf8 10.Rg7 Kd8 11.Bxc6! (blasting open the seventh rank, after

which Black falls prey to a mating attack after all) 11...dxc6 12.Rxf7 Ke8 13.Rh7 Kd8 14.Qf7, and the white pieces on the seventh rank decide the issue.

**7.Qxc4 Bxc4 8.Bh7 Bf2+**

Black panics, but 8...Ke8 would also have been of no avail. After 9.Rg8+ Bf8 10.Rxf8+ Kxf8 11.Rg3 he would be mated as well.

**9.Kh5**

**1-0**

A nice concluding move. After 9...Be2+ 10.Kh6. mate is inevitable.

□ **Popovic,Petar**

■ **Kindermann,Stefan**

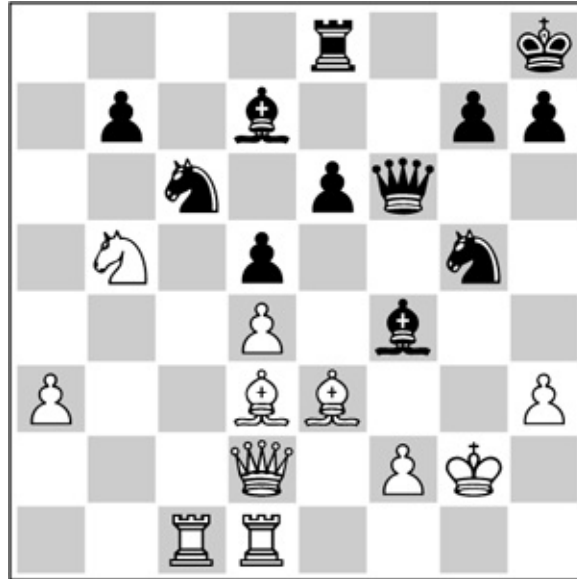
Dortmund 1988 (1)



4.Be2 is met by 4...e5.

**4...Bxf4 5.Qd2?**

Now White topples over. 5.Qe2 would have put up more resistance, even though also then Black would keep the initiative with 5...e5.



**5...e5!**

This is the move that is always the secret behind all Black's operations. Both the bishop on d7 and the rook on e8 will now play an important role.

**6.Rh1**

The variations that arise after the critical 6.dxe5 Bxh3+ are illustrative of the black attack. Samarian now gives: 7.Kh1 (7.Kg1 Nf3+ 8.Kb1 Qh4 9.Bxf4 Bf1+ and mate on the next move) 7...Qh6 8.Bxf4 Bg2+ 9.Kxg2 Qh3+ 10.Kg1 Nf3#. Also after the text move, it turns out that Black has prepared a nice surprise for his opponent.

**6...Nf3! 7.dxe5**

The knight could not be captured:

**7.Kxf3**

Bxe3+8.Kxe3 exd4#.

**7...Ncxe5**

Now all of Black's pieces are activated, and therefore it is not surprising that the game finishes quickly.

**8.Qe2 Qg5+ 9.Kf1 Bxh3+ 0-1**

□ Sjugirov, Sanan

■ Tiurin, Alexander

Moscow 2008 (3)



Black appears to have everything under control, but a cold shower awaits him.

**1.Nef5+!**

The black king position looks solid, but this sacrifice demolishes the defensive works.

**1...gxf5 2.Qg3!!**

The hardest move to find in this attack. With this relatively quiet retreat, White introduces a lethal discovered check into the position.

**2...Nh5**

2...Kh8 is met by 3.Bxf6+, with mate to follow.



**3.Bf6+!**

This elegant double check ends all resistance.  
**3...Kxf6 4.Ng8#**

**1-0**

□ **Khalifman, Alexander**

■ **Seirawan, Yasser**

Wijk aan Zee 1991 (9)



Although the black king position looks reasonably solid, White's surplus of pieces on this wing brings about a quick decision.

**1.Rxe8!**

The defenders of the black king are eliminated.

**1...Rxe8 2.Nh6+!**

Next, the position is blown open with a sacrifice that Black cannot refuse:

**2...gxh6**

**2...Kh8 3.Qxf7 Be7 4.Qg8+ Rxc8 5.Nf7#** – smothered mate!

**3.Qg4+**

Black resigned, as both 3...Kh8 and 3...Bg7 run into 4.Bxf6.

□ **Alekhine, Alexander**

■ **Junge, Klaus**

Lublin 1942 (5)



The 'hole in the king position' has already been created. All that remains for White is to bring in his pieces.

### **1.Qh6**

An obvious move which, however, turns out to contain some hidden extra points. First of all White threatens 2.Bc2, after which 3.Qxh7# is unavoidable.

### **1...f5?**

This allows an attractive combination. 1...e4 was the only move here, but after 2.Qxf6 Black would face an uphill struggle as well.

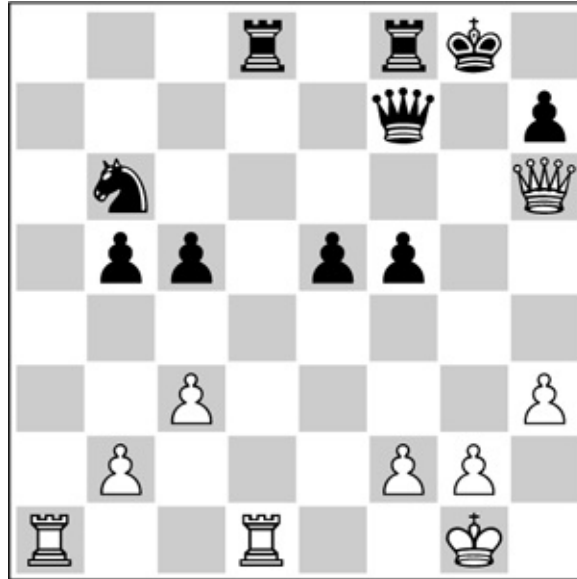
### **2.Bxf7+!**

A bolt from the blue. Black now succumbs to a combination of factors. By the way, White had another win here: 2.Qg5+ Kh8 3.Q/6+ Kg8 4.Rxd8 Rxd8 5.Bxf7+.

### **2...Qxf7**

Other possibilities are: 2...Rxf7 3.Qg5+ Kh8 4.Rxd8+; 2...Kxf7 3.Qxh7+ Kf6 4.Qxc7.





### 3.Rxd8! Na4

After 3...Rxd8 White would not only win the exchange, but also the unfortunate knight on b6:4.Qg5+ Kf8 5.Qxd8+.

### 4.b3

**1-0**

A nice concluding move. For instance, 4...Nxc3 will be met by the decisive 5.Raa8.

## Exercises

5.1



White has a large surplus of pieces on the kingside. How can he turn this into something concrete?

[Solution](#)

1



1

1

5.3



White has invested material in order to besiege the black king. How can he maintain his initiative?

[Solution](#)

5.4



It is logical to consider the exchange sacrifice **22...Rxc3**. But is the sacrifice justified? If so, how should Black continue after **23.bxc3**?

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 6

# Passed pawn

### 6.1 Introduction

What is a passed pawn? According to common opinion: a pawn that meets no enemy pawns on its way to the other side. Passed pawns play an important role in the endgame, but they can be a significant factor in the middlegame as well. The Great Teacher Aaron Nimzowitsch formulated it as follows, many years ago: a passed pawn has a 'lust to expand' (it wants to move forward), and therefore the defender must keep it 'under lock and key'. In other words: a passed pawn must be blockaded.

In general, we can say that a passed pawn on a board full of pieces functions as a kind of buffer for the player who has the initiative. It is used under an 'umbrella' of tactical finesses to create as much chaos in the enemy ranks as possible. In this context it is not unthinkable that the passed pawn may be lost somewhere along the way, but if the attacker plays his cards right, his own pieces have been manoeuvred to promising positions in the meantime. In such cases the pawn is not only a mighty strategic weapon, it can also be used for many tactical motifs. Another type of passed pawn occurs when most of the minor pieces have been exchanged. Then the 'middlegame' already displays endgame tendencies, but nevertheless it is useful to study these situations. In many cases the pawn is already a decisive factor if it has reached the sixth or seventh rank and there are only major pieces left on the board (see 6.3).

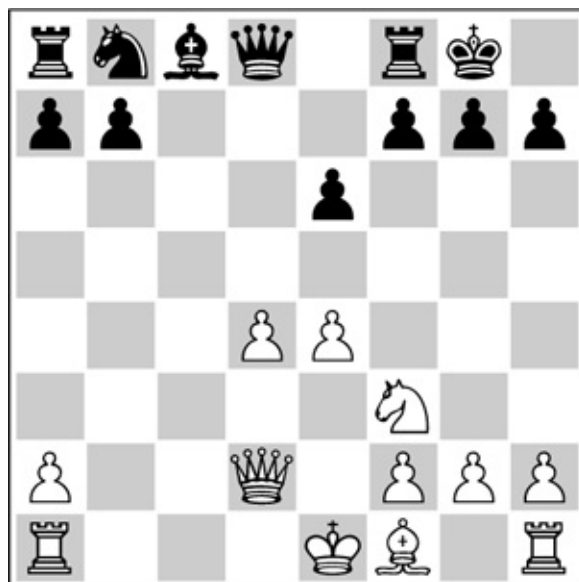
Summarizing, we can establish that there are two types of 'passed pawn in the middlegame', and we will discuss them separately.

### 6.2 The passed pawn as an attacking weapon

Certain opening variations lead to a pawn structure that already contains a potential passed pawn. In most cases, the strategy of the player who has this passed pawn is based on making use of its potential.

From the starting position we play the following moves:

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.e4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 cxd4 8.cxd4 Bb4+ 9.Bd2 Bxd2+ 10.Qxd2 0-0**



In this position, which arises from the Semi-Tarrasch, White has a potential passed pawn. In some books this pawn formation (d4+e4 versus e6) is called ‘the small centre’. White’s play should be aimed at carrying through the pawn push d4-d5. This raises the question how White has to develop his pieces further and, especially, where he should place his rooks.

During several training sessions I have asked my chess students which squares are the best for White to put his rooks on in this position. Most of them answered that they should be put on c1 and d1. Grandmasters, however, opt for the squares d1 and e1.

Essentially, White wants to keep the major pieces on the board and prefers to exchange the minor pieces (see the examples further on in this chapter). If he places a rook on c1, later on Black will be able to exchange at least one pair of rooks with...Rc8, followed by...Rxc1.

For Black, on the other hand, it is useful to exchange the major pieces and keep the minor ones on the board, since he has the prospect of an endgame with the ‘outside passed pawn’ (he has a pawn majority on the queenside). And this advantage may be converted especially well in an endgame with minor pieces only.

That is why from the diagram position, White often chooses a set-up with moves like Bc4, 0-0, Rad1, Rfe1. All his pieces support the d4-d5 push, whereas Black’s pieces cannot easily be exchanged.

It is important to know that it is helpful for the player who has the passed pawn to have as many open files as possible in the neighbourhood of this pawn. This is not so surprising, as by moving the passed pawn forward he will create footholds for his own pieces. These footholds may, for instance, be used as a kind of

springboard to jump in (i.e., inside the black defences). Sometimes this happens in a melee of tactical complications, and the passed pawn perishes like a valiant knight, who sacrifices his life for his king. This is nicely illustrated in the following fragment.

□ **Kasparov, Garry**

■ **Sosonko, Genna**

Tilburg 1981 (1)



White has sacrificed an exchange in order to make his bishop pair operative. What strikes us in this position is that diagonals are more important than files. In short, the white bishops will have full play over the black rooks. The only thing that keeps Black upright is his knight, which is a tower of strength on e5. Although the pawn on c5 is hanging, Black has not yet had time to eliminate it. Now Kasparov uses it as a springboard:

**1.Rd6! Re8**

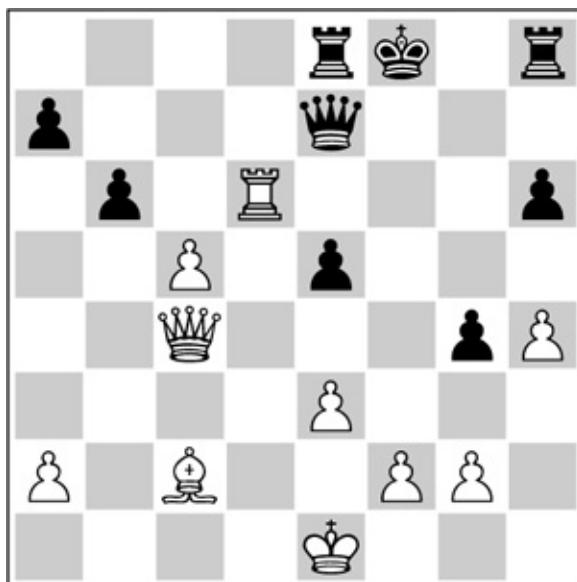
The threat was 2.Rxf6+!, sweeping away the foundations that support the black knight.

**2.Bxe5!**

As said, the knight must be removed from the board. This is an opportune moment, since now 2...Qxe5 fails to 3.Rxf6+ Kg7 4.Rg6+ Kf8 5.Qxc4, and the white attack is virtually decisive. After 5...bxc5 6.Rxg4, the black king hasn't a shred of protection left, and in the right circumstances White will be able to set up a deadly threat on the a2-g8 diagonal with Bb3.

**2...fxe5 3.Qxc4**





### 3...Qf7

It is impossible for Black to undertake anything sensible against White's supremacy on the light squares. After, for example, 3...Rd8 4.Bb3! Rxd6 5.cxd6 Qd7 6.Qd3!, White's passed pawn on d6, combined with Black's exposed king, make Black's position untenable. It is amusing that the c5 pawn, which appeared to be doomed, now suddenly plays the starring role!

Also after 3...bxc5 4.Bg6 Rh7 (equally insufficient is 4...Rb8 5.Re6 Qd7 6.Rf6+, and White wins decisive material) 5.Qxc5, the plethora of threats will be Black's undoing.

### 4.Qe4!

Kasparov plays in the spirit of the position. He could also have liquidated to a winning rook ending with 4.Qxf7+ Kxf7 5.Bg6+ Ke7 (5...Kg7 6.Bxe8 Rxe8 7.cxb6 axb6 8.Rxb6 Ra8 9.Rb2, winning) 6.Bxe8 Rxe8 7.Rxh6 bxc5 8.Rc6. After the even stronger text move, the main threat is 5.Bb3+ followed by 6.Qf5+.

### 4...g3 5.fxc3

And Black had seen enough. After 5...bxc5 6.Bb3 Qg7 7.Qf5+ it would indeed be curtains.

If there is a passed pawn on the board, Black's defence is based on the blockade of that pawn. As we have touched on before, Nimzowitsch already used to write about the passed pawn's 'lust to expand' and compared it to a 'criminal' that needs to be 'kept under lock and key'. The passed pawn as a 'burglar', or rather, as a 'jailbreaker', is shown in the following example, where tactical finesses play an important part. Who could demonstrate this better than our great teacher

himself?

□ **Nimzowitsch, Aaron**

■ **Von Gottschall, Hermann**

Breslau 1925 (5)



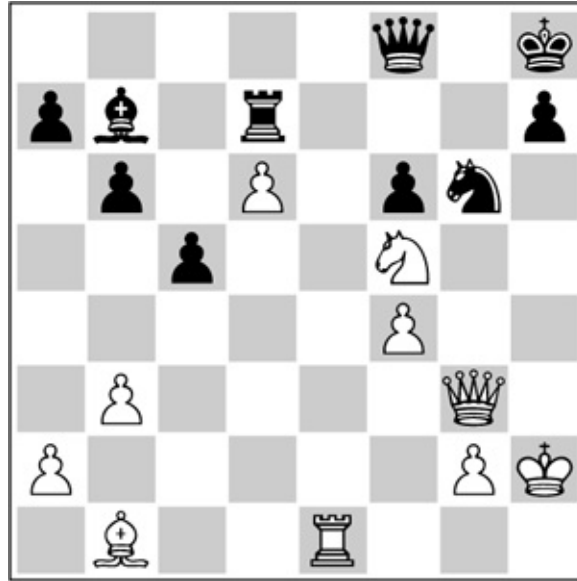
In the diagram position White has a passed pawn on d5, but it seems rather weak here. That's why White first points his arrows at Black's vulnerable kingside, in front of which the white pieces have already taken up menacing positions.

**1.Re1 Qf8 2.d6!**

For the moment White's pieces are ideally posted, so now the floor is given to the passed pawn! This pawn fulfils an important function in creating a foothold (a springboard!) on e7, which two of White's pieces can use to 'jump in'.

**2...Rd7**

This weakens the back rank, which will create considerable problems for Black. It is important to give some thought to the following variation, where the passed pawn gets the last word: 2...Bc8 3.Ne7 (using the springboard!) 3...Qh6+ 4.Kg1 Nxf4 5.Nxc8 Rxc8 6.d7 Rd8 7.Re8+ and White promotes to a queen.



### 3.Qc3

A move that is hard to find. Nimzowitsch aims at Black's Achilles' heel: the pawn on f6. Now White threatens to win immediately by 4.Re8! Qxe8 5.Qxf6+ Kg8 6.Nh6#.

Even more to the point was 3.Qh3!. The queen focuses on the other weak spot in Black's position: h7. At the same time it keeps an eye on the unprotected rook on d7. A possible continuation is: 3...Qg8 (if 3...Bc6, then 4.Ne7!, whereas after 3...Bc8 the game is finished even more quickly by 4.Ne7! Kg7 5.Nxc8 Qxc8 6.Bxg6 Kxg6 7.Qg4+ Kf7 8.Re7+). In this last variation, the beautiful cooperation of White's pieces catches the eye, as well as the importance of the foothold on e7) 4.Nh6 Qd8 5.Bxg6! and White wins.

### 3...Rxd6

Objectively speaking this is the best continuation, but it leads Black into a hopeless endgame, which is not difficult to win for White with the exchange up. Critical was 3...Rf7, but then the pawn would have its say again: 4.d7! Bc6 (4...Rxd7 5.Re8 Qxe8 6.Qxf6+ Kg8 7.Nh6#) 5.Re8, winning.

The best move appears to be 3...Kg8, but then White brings a new piece into the game: 4.Bd3!. The bishop threatens to deal a heavy blow via the vulnerable c4-g8 diagonal, whereas after 4...Bd5 it will be deployed on another attractive diagonal: 5.Bb5 Rd8 (5...Rxd6 will not offer Black any solace either after 6.Re8) 6.d7, and the threat of Re8 has become impossible to parry. Once again, the passed pawn plays the starring role.



Analysis diagram

#### 4.Nxd6

After the text the win is a matter of technique, which is handled expertly by Nimzowitsch. As this phase lies outside the scope of this chapter, I give the rest of the game with light comments only.

**4...Qxd6 5.Bxg6 hxg6 6.Re8+**

6.Qe3! would have been a little smarter.

**6...Kg7 7.Qg3 Bc6 8.Re3 Bd7 9.f5!**

Thus White forces the exchange of queens, after which the rook can demonstrate its superiority over the bishop.

**9...Qxg3+ 10.Kxg3 Bxf5 11.Re7+ Kh6 12.Rxa7 Bb1 13.Ra6 b5 14.a4 bxa4 15.bxa4 Kg5 16.Rb6 Be4 17.a5 f5 18.a6 c4 19.a7 c3 20.Rb3 f4+ 21.Kf2 c2 22.Rc3 1-0**

In the following example, the passed pawn is also brought into action as a tactical weapon.

□ **Grooten,Herman**

■ **Voormans,Jan**

Eindhoven 1982 (7)



The white position makes an overwhelming impression. Most of his pieces are ready for an attack on Black's somewhat exposed king position. What is less conspicuous is that White's passed pawn on d5 just might be going to play first violin...

**1...Ba6**

Black must do something. With the text he wants to win an exchange.

**2.Qh5 g6**



**3.Ng4!**

The best continuation. There was also an attractive double piece sacrifice, but, as so often, the first piece would be taken and the second wouldn't. A few examples:

- A) After 3.Nxg6? fxg6 4.Bxg6 Bf6 the attack will be stopped;  
 B) Also after 3.Nxf7?! Rxf7 (not 3...Kxf7?, since after 4.Qxh7+ Ke8 5.Qxg6+ Kd8 6.Be5 Qd7 7.d6 White would win easily) 4.Bxg6 Bf6 5.Bxf7+ Qxf7 6.Qg4+ Kf8 7.Bxf6 Qxf6, Black appears to have the upper hand;  
 C) After 3.Bxg6? fxg6 4.Nxg6 Bf6 White's attacking play is a total failure because too many of his pieces are hanging.

### 3...f6 4.Bxg6 Bd8

Black finds a way to create complications. After 4...Bd6, 5.Bxf6! wouldn't have been so hard to find.



Now White is forced to conjure up a relatively hard-to-find attacking concept in order to justify his previous play.

In the diagram position White has two ways to gain a decisive advantage.

### 5.Nh6+

It seems logical to involve the passed pawn into the attack immediately. The other way to put his passed pawn into action was 5.d6 Qg7 (things would get worse for Black after 5...Qb7 6.Nh6+ Kh8 7.Nf7+, when he could throw in the towel as well) 6.Qd5+ Kh8 7.Qxa8 Bxf1 8.Rxf1 hxg6, and White is winning.

### 5...Kh8 6.Nf5

The intention of White's knight manoeuvre is not only to cover the g7-square, so as not to allow Black to involve his queen into the defence, but mainly to create a foothold on e7 with d5-d6 and use it as a springboard for the knight. Next, the threat of Nf5-e7 will interrupt the black queen's protection of the h7-point, thereby creating a mating net that cannot be unravelled.

### 6...Bxf1 7.d6 Qb7 8.Rxf1

Stay alert at all times! Black threatened to give mate in one.

### 8...Rg8

There was no remedy left to the following elegant interference motif, which is well-known in the world of endgame studies.

### 9.Ne7!

Actually this is a double interference: the knight not only interrupts the seventh rank, but also a second line of protection: the one by the bishop of the f6-point.

### 9...Rxf6

After 9...Rxf6, 10.Bxf6 would also decide.



### 10.Bxf6+!

White finishes off elegantly.

1-0

The conclusion would have been 10...Rxf6 11.Qe8+ Kg7 12.Qg8+ Kh6 13.Qg5#

## 6.3 The passed pawn with major pieces

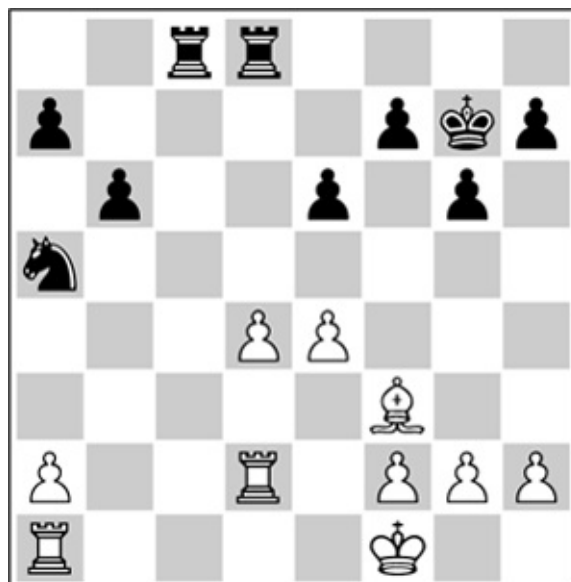
A passed pawn prefers to have free rein.

In the previous section we have seen that a knight can fulfil the function of a blockading piece perfectly. The following position provides us with a good look at the playing scheme associated with this theme.

□ Eliskases, Erich

■ Flohr, Salo

Semmering 1937 (4)



White has a potential passed pawn on d4 and Black gives him a helping hand, so that he can even turn it into a protected passed pawn:

**1...e5 2.d5**

Here the attentive reader will scratch his head in wonder. Why willingly give your opponent a protected passed pawn? The answer is simple: via the manoeuvre ...Na5-c4-d6, the pawn will be put behind bars, and then Black will have achieved a number of things. He has fixed the centre pawns on the colour of the bishop (thereby downgrading the latter to a 'bad bishop').

On the blockading square d6 (or, as Nimzowitsch called it, the 'stopping square',) the knight fulfils a useful function. It can look 'beyond' the passed pawn, as it were, and apply pressure to the e4 pawn. As Black also has control of the c-file as well as a majority on the queenside, we can safely say that White has substantial strategic problems here.

**2...Nc4 3.Re2 Nd6 4.Rb1 Rc4 5.g3 Rdc8 6.Bg2 Rc1+ 7.Rxc1 Rxc1+ 8.Re1 Rxe1+?!**

Perhaps Black should have preferred to keep the rooks on the board with 8... Rc4. This would have given him more practical chances to build on his indisputable advantages. In the game, the protected passed pawn makes the winning process difficult for Black.

**9.Kxe1**

Even in this simplified position Black has realistic winning chances. The 'immobile' knight keeps everything under control and cannot be driven away. Moreover, it helps Black to carry out his plans.

**9...f5 10.f3**

To his detriment White must keep the position closed, although this does not



exactly make his bishop any better. After 10.exf5 gxf5, his d-pawn will become isolated and will be lost in the long run.

**10...fxe4 11.fxe4 b5**

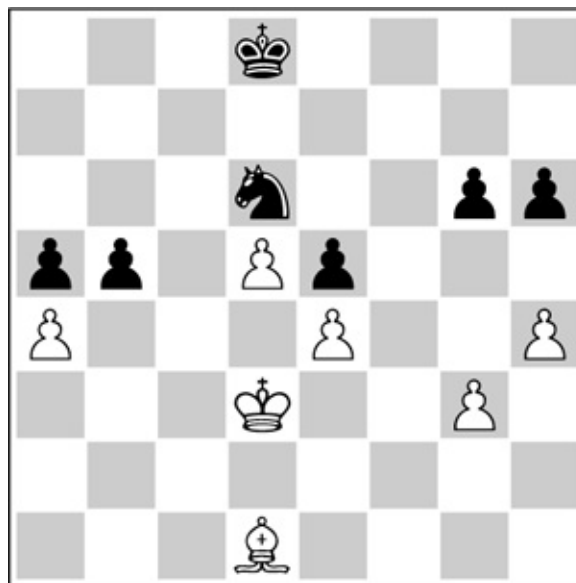
A second cornerstone of Black's winning plan: the pawn majority on the queenside.

**12.Kd2a5 13.Kd3**

Please note that the white king cannot penetrate anywhere on the queenside.

**13...Kf6 14.Bf3 Ke7 15.h4 h6 16.Bd1 Kd8 17.a4**

White puts even more pawns on the wrong colour, but this is indeed his best attempt to scrape a draw. If Black wants to win, he will have to create a passage for his king somewhere.



**17...bxa4?!**

This jeopardizes the win. Better was the thematic 17...b4, after which Black's winning plan looks as follows: king to b6, and then play the knight round to c5, where it keeps the pawns on a4 and e4 covered, and Black can work with the threat of ...b4-b3 as well.

**18.Bxa4 Kc7 19.Bc2 Kb6 20.Kc3 Kb5 21.Kb3 Kc5 22.Ka4 Nc4**

It's been quite a while since this knight made a move.

**23.Bb3?!**

White collapses under the continuous pressure. He should have played 23.Bb1, in order to meet 23...Nd2 with 24.Bd3, after which the f1-square is covered and the planned ...Nf1 is out of the question. It is doubtful whether Black could have won in that case.

**23...Nd2 24.Bc2 Nf1**

The knight now goes on the prowl.

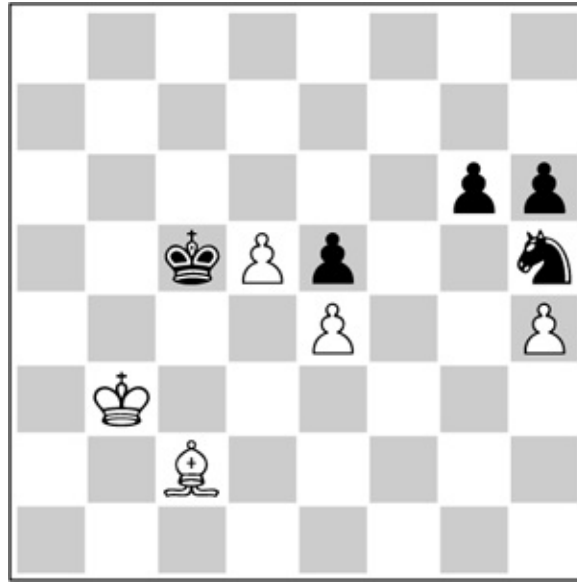
### 25.Kxa5

After 25.g4, White would also have had to part with the g-pawn: 25...Ne3.

### 25...Nxg3 26.Ka4 Nh5?!

A little smarter would have been 26...Nf1 27.Kb3 Nd2+ 28.Kc3 Nf3, and Black wins a pawn.

### 27.Kb3



### 27...Kd4

Now the game turns into a race that ends favourably for Black. The ‘criminal’ has to be released and that means danger. But Black has a passed pawn himself, and his is a lot harder to stop.

### 28.Kb4?

It was difficult to see, but the only chance of a draw was 28.Kb2, trying to bring the king within reach of the black g-pawn. A possible continuation would be: 28...g5 29.hxg5 hxg5 30.Kc1 Ke3 31.Bd1 Nf6 (31...Nf4 32.Bg4 Kxe4 33.d6 Nd3+ 34.Kd2 Nb4 35.Bc8) 32.d6, and White achieves a draw by the skin of his teeth.

### 28...Nf6 29.d6 g5

The bishop is still bad, since it is hampered in its movements by the pawn on e4.

### 30.hxg5 hxg5 31.Kb5 g4 32.Bd1 g3 33.Bf3 Ke3 34.Bh1 Kf2

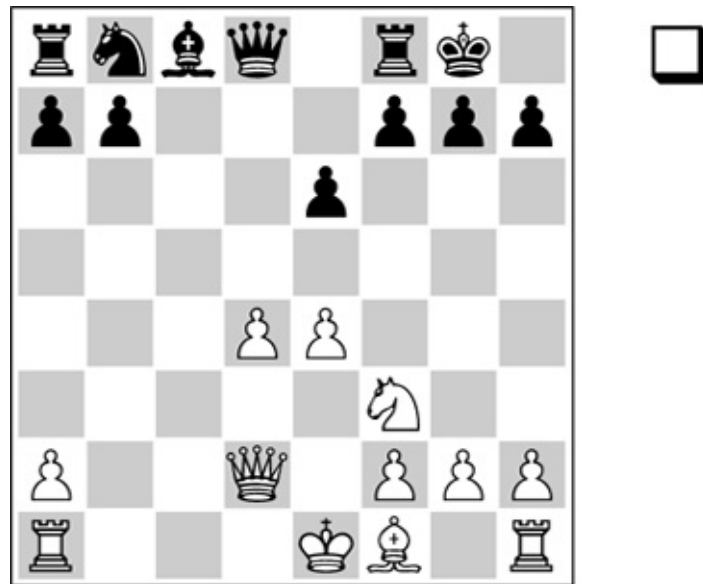
Black has calculated excellently: he will arrive just in time.

### 35.Kc6 g2 36.Bxg2 Kxg2 37.d7 Nxd7 38.Kxd7 Kf3

0-1

In the above example we have seen that the knight was superior to the bishop. This was caused mainly by the closed character of the position, which made the blockading piece more powerful.

For Black it was important to keep closed as many lines as possible around the pawn, so as to make the blockade more effective.  
Now let us briefly return to the first diagram in this chapter.



White can create a passed pawn in the centre. As we now know, it is important for White that he possesses open files in the neighbourhood of the passed pawn, so as to be able to take better advantage of the footholds that may be created. In this type of position Black also has an important trump card: his majority on the queenside. His play must be aimed at pushing this majority forward with ...a6 and ...b5, which enables him to secure the important square c4 for his pieces. Additionally, we can observe that the exchange of minor pieces is helpful for White in bringing about an endgame with major pieces. For Black, the opposite holds: he will prefer to keep the minor pieces on and exchange the major ones. This may also explain why White later plays his queen's rook to d1 instead of c1. If he opted for the latter, then Black's task would be made easier after ...b6, ...Bb7, ...Nc6, ...Rc8 and ...Na5, because then he could remove the rook from the board with ...Rxc1, followed by ...Qa8 and ...Rc8.

The author himself has had the pleasure of gathering experience with this type of position, in a game against the strong chess computer program called Zugzwang. There is a story connected to this. In the early 1990s in The Hague, an annual confrontation between man and computer was organized, which was sponsored by the Dutch insurance company Aegon. In a splendid ambience, strong grandmasters, masters and amateurs pitted their strength against the strongest chess computers, but also against those of amateur programmers. Before the game in question, I was told that I would be playing a horrible calculating monster, with 1024 parallel-connected processors. The young men facing me,

Rainer Feldmann and Peter Mysliwietz, were Ph.D. students from the Paderborn University in Germany.

The difference with a normal chess game is that when you play a computer, you will often engage in some small-talk with the people sitting opposite. They told me that for their research project, they were trying to make these processors communicate with each other in an effective way. For fear of walking into a trap, I tried to keep the game simple, and to steer slowly towards an endgame. I received some help from the calculating machine.

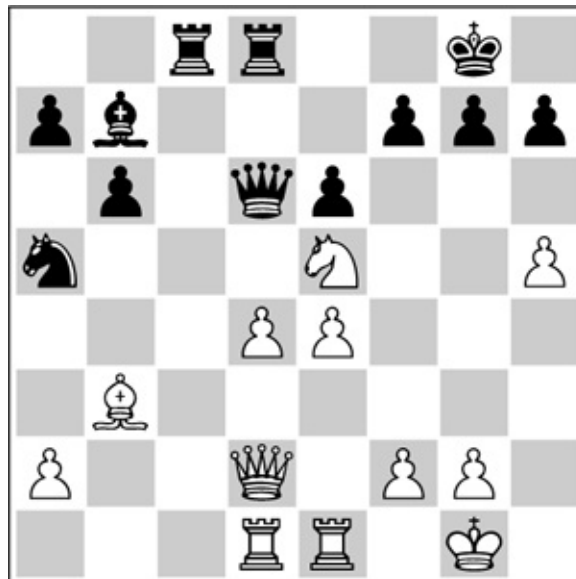
TD 2.9 (D41)

□ **Grooten,Herman**

■ **COMPUTER Zugzwang**

The Hague 1993

**1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.Nc3 c5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.e4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 cxd4  
8.cxd4 Bb4+ 9.Bd2 Bxd2+ 10.Qxd2 0-0 11.Bc4 Nc6 12.0-0 b6 13.Rfe1 Bb7  
14.Rad1 Rc8 15.Bb3 Na5 16.Ne5 Qd6 17.h4 Rfd8 18.h5**



**18...Nxb3**

It is doubtful whether Black should have gone for this exchange.

**19.axb3 h6 20.Re3 Qc7 21.Rg3**

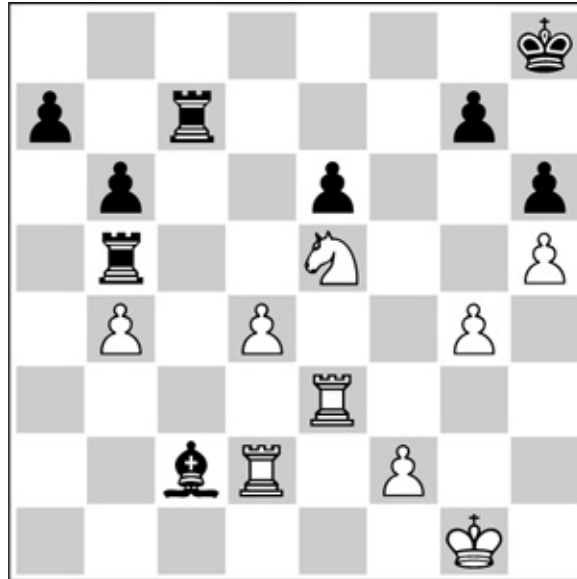
Probably, 21.Qe2 was slightly better, in order to prevent the queen exchange.

**21...f6 22.Ng4 Qc2 23.Nxf6+ Kh8 24.Qxc2 Rxc2 25.Ng4 Bxe4**

At first sight Black has no problems here.

**26.Ne5 Rc7?!**

Here, 26...Kg8, to bring the king to the centre, was more logical.  
**27.b4 Rd5 28.Re3 Bf5 29.g4 Bc2 30.Rd2 Rb5**



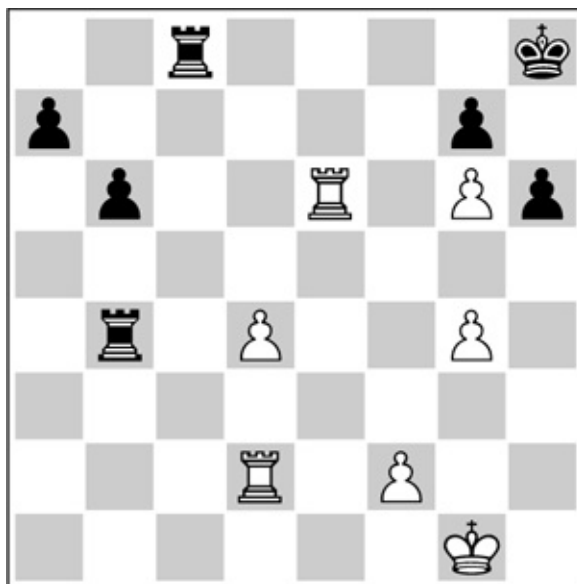
### **31.Ng6+! Bxg6**

It sounds strange, but because of this exchange Black now ends up in a virtually hopeless endgame. The alternative 31...Kg8 does not produce a rosy picture either: 32.Rxe6 Kf7 33.Rde2, and now 33...Rg5 is the only move to continue the struggle. Here, 33...Rxb4 fails miserably on account of 34.Nh8+! Kg8 35.Rxc2 Rxc2 36.Re8+ Kh7 37.Ng6, and mate is inevitable!

### **32.hxg6**

We can categorize this under the heading ‘horizon effects’ with computers of those times. The fact that the black king is now caught in the corner, combined with the soon-to-be-passed d-pawn, make this position strategically winning for White, but a computer didn’t recognize this as such.

### **32...Rxb4 33.Rxe6 Rc8**



I remember that my conversation partners were quite optimistic during the game. Black's two connected passed pawns on the queenside apparently made the apparatus blink merrily. In actual fact this position is already almost losing for Black. The current engines are a little less optimistic, but even they are not 'aware' that White's passed pawn is a deadly weapon.

**34.f3 Rd8 35.d5 Rf4 36.Kg2 Rff8**

Also after 36...Rf6 37.Ra2 a5 38.Rb2 Rdf8 39.Rexb6 Rxf3 40.d6, White maintains excellent winning chances.

**37.d6!**

Grandmaster Hodgson during the analysis of a game once used the name 'push pawn' when he was talking about a passed pawn.

**37...Kg8 38.d7**

This pawn on the seventh rank is invaluable compared to Black's majority on the queenside. On d7 the pawn has a paralysing effect on the black pieces. Another, not unimportant factor in this position is that the black king cannot be brought into play. And that has everything to do with the pawn on g6.

**38...b5**

This 'push pawn' is of a different nature. The black pawns lack assistance, and so their march is doomed to failure.

**39.Re7**

At this point, modern engines also 'see' that the position is lost for Black. White picks up Black's passed pawns at his leisure, before announcing the final act.

**39...Ra8 40.Rd5 b4 41.Rb5 b3**

Neither does 41...a5 help, in view of 42.Rbe5! b3 43.Re8 b2 44.Rxa8, and White wins. Or 44...b1Q 45.Rxf8+ Kxf8 46.d8R#.

**42.Rxb3 a5 43.Rbe3 Rad8 44.R3e5 a4 45.Ra5 Rb8 46.Rxa4 Rfd8 47.Rf4**

Here the two Ph.Ds pulled the plug. The ‘human eye’ had caught them by surprise in this game.

At the beginning of this section, we discussed the role of the knight as a blockading piece. It should not remain unnoticed that a bishop can also sometimes fulfil a useful role as a blockading piece. There is an amusing anecdote from which we can learn something useful here.

In the popular game of Bughouse chess (in which two players face two other players, and you pass the pieces you have captured on to your partner, who may put one on his board by way of a move), in the regular variant you are allowed to put a pawn on the seventh rank. Consequently, it regularly happens that suddenly two or three such giants appear on the board, who quickly promote to queens.

It seemed that nothing could be done about this, until my partner had found the solution. ‘I need bishops’, he shouted. Only bishops can stop these monsters!’

And he was right. As soon as a pawn was put on the seventh rank, he immediately put a bishop in front of it as a blockading piece, after which it was impossible to create two connected passed pawns. This teaches us that a bishop can be an ideal piece to keep two connected passed pawns under control.

We have remarked earlier that the player who has a passed pawn generally profits from the exchange of minor pieces, since then they cannot fulfil their role of blockaders anymore. If major pieces have to take over this task, this mostly results in a serious loss of activity. In such cases a lot depends on how far the pawn has advanced. As a rule, an endgame with major pieces is won for the side with the passed pawn if the latter has reached the sixth or seventh rank. An instructive example is the following game:

TD 2.9 (D41)

□ **Petrosian, Tigran**

■ **Kortchnoi, Viktor**

Il Ciocco m 1977 (6)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 d5 4.Nc3 c5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.e4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 cxd4  
8.cxd4 Bb4+ 9.Bd2 Bxd2+ 10.Qxd2 0-0 11.Bc4 Nc6 12.0-0 b6 13.Rfe1 Bb7  
14.Rad1 Ne7**

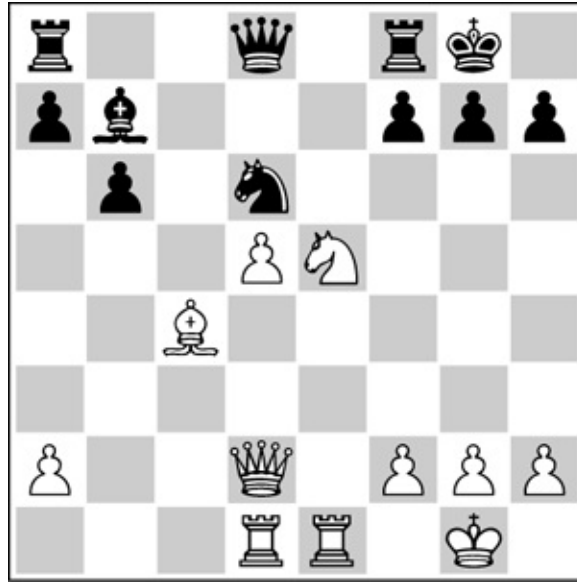
At the time of this match, this was a new idea. The intention is to play the knight via f5 to the blockading square d6, if White sets his passed pawn in motion.

**15.d5**

The thematic push.

**15...exd5 16.exd5 Nf5 17.Ne5 Nd6**

It looks as if Black's strategy is proved right. The pawn has been 'put behind bars' and Black can develop play along the c-file, in combination with his majority on the queenside. The following move must have come like a bolt from the blue.



**18.Nc6!**

White makes use of the foothold on c6 to penetrate deep into the black position with his pieces. This move appears to lose a piece, but good calculation shows that it won't come to that.

**18...Bxc6?**

Kortchnoi collapses immediately. As we stated above, in this situation Black must keep the minor pieces on the board in all circumstances. This erroneous exchange leads to an endgame with major pieces where White will have a pawn on the sixth rank. After 18...Qf6 and now, for instance, 19.Bd3 Rfe8, Black would only be slightly inferior.

No solace was offered by 18...Nxc4 19.Nxd8 Nxd2 20.Nxb7 Nc4 21.d6, with an almost decisive advantage for White.

**19.dxc6 Nxc4 20.Qf4**

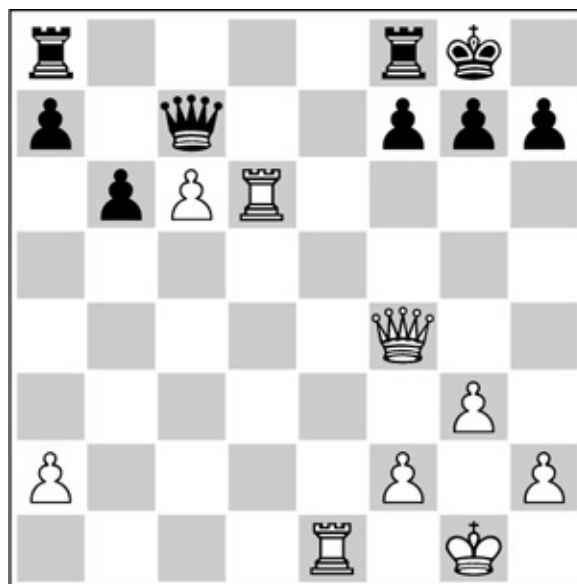
The point of the combination. In this way, White regains his piece.

**20...Nd6 21.Rxd6 Qc7**

This is the position that White was aiming for when he decided on his 18th move. We can conclude that the pawn on the sixth rank makes the position winning for White in a higher sense. The conversion requires almost perfect technique, but that was something Petrosian was famous for!



22.g3



Exactly. The queen on f4 is protected, and back-rank mates are ruled out. It is important for White that the black rooks cannot be easily activated, and with this move Petrosian anticipates every eventuality.

### 22...h6

Kortchnoi realizes that he is doomed to passivity. To 22...Rfe8 his opponent has a tailor-made reply: 23.Rxe8+ Rxe8 24.Re6! (a magnificent move, with which White liquidates to a winning queen ending) 24...Qc8 25.Rxe8+ Qxe8 26.c7, and the pawn on the seventh rank decides the battle.

Also after the alternative 22...Rad8, White comes out on top: 23.Rxd8 Qxd8 24.c7, and the pawn has reached the seventh rank and is protected by the queen, making promotion inevitable.

### 23.Qe5

Ruling out all rook moves to central files. There was also nothing wrong with 23.Qd4 Rfe8 24.Rxe8+ Rxe8 25.Kf1! (better not allow the rook behind the white pawn: after 25.Qd5 Re1+ 26.Kg2 Rc1, Black would be back in the game) 25...Rc8 26.Qd5 and the threat of 27.Rd7 decides the game in White's favour.

### 23...Rac8

Or 23...Rad8 24.Rxd8 Qxd8 25.c7. If the pawn can be moved one rank further, you should (almost) always do this without hesitation.

### 24.Qd5 Kh7

It is clear that Black has no useful moves left. Of course, Petrosian had also prepared an answer to 24...Rfe8: 25.Rxe8+ Rxe8 26.Rd7, and either Black collapses due to the weakness of the f7-point, or he can no longer prevent the promotion of the pawn after 26...Qe5 27.Qxe5 Rxe5 28.c7.

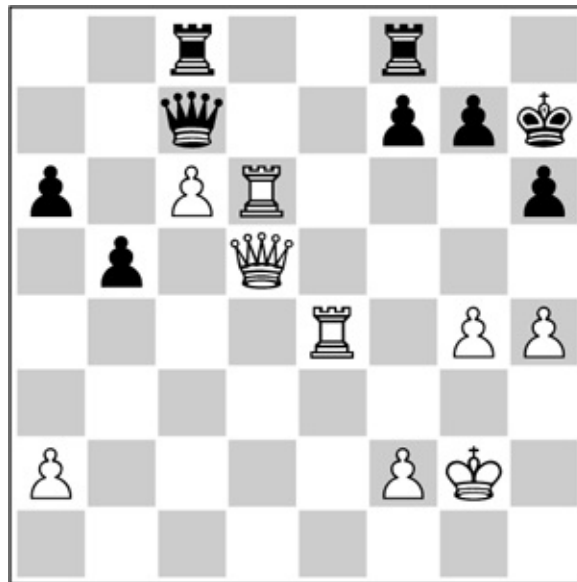
**25.Re4 Kg8 26.Kg2 a6 27.h4**

After a few preparations, White moves on to the second stage of his plan. His centralized position dooms Black to passivity. Petrosian wants to transform his activity into an attack on the black king, and to accomplish this, he pushes his king-side pawns forward, in order to disrupt the black pawn structure on that flank.

**27...b5 28.g4!**

This way White will later be able to take advantage of the target on h6.

**28...Kh7**



**29.Re2!**

A very deep move, and one that computers have trouble finding. White would like to attack the h6-point with g4-g5. In principle, Black will want to keep the lines in the vicinity of his king closed, and so he will have to opt for ...h6-h5. In that case White wants to take aim at the h5 pawn with Qd5-f3, forcing Kortchnoi to weaken his kingside further with ...g7-g6.

**29...Kh8**

It goes without saying that White had very accurately calculated that Black's break-out 29...Rce8 30.Rxe8 Rxe8 31.Rd7 loses. After 31...Qf4 (a nice try, since the pawn on g4 is weak as well and White has also weakened his own king position), White can simplify with 32.Qf5+ into a rook endgame where the passed pawn will deal the death blow, for example: 32...Qxf5 33.gxf5 Rc8 34.c7 a5 (Black can never retreat his king to the back rank on account of Rd8+; 34...f6 35.h5 b4 36.Kf3, and with a king march to the queenside White puts Black's potential passed pawn out of action) 35.Rxf7 (this is the most convincing win, which still had to be calculated sharply. In several lines White wins thanks to his

absolute possession of the seventh rank. The alternative was to walk on with his own king in order to keep the black passed pawn under control: 35.Kf3 b4 36.Ke2 a4 37.Kd3 b3 38.axb3 a3 39.Kc2) 35...b4 36.h5! (premature would be 36.f6? due to 36...Kg6) 36...a4 37.f6 b3 38.Rxg7+ Kh8 39.axb3 axb3 40.Rd7 b2 41.Rd8+ Kh7 42.Rxc8 b1Q 43.Rh8+ Kxh8 44.c8Q+, and Black will be mated.

**30.g5 h5 31.Rd2**

Finally White can give up the e-file, as he wants to be able to play Qf3.

**31...Rfe8 32.Qf3 g6 33.R2d5**

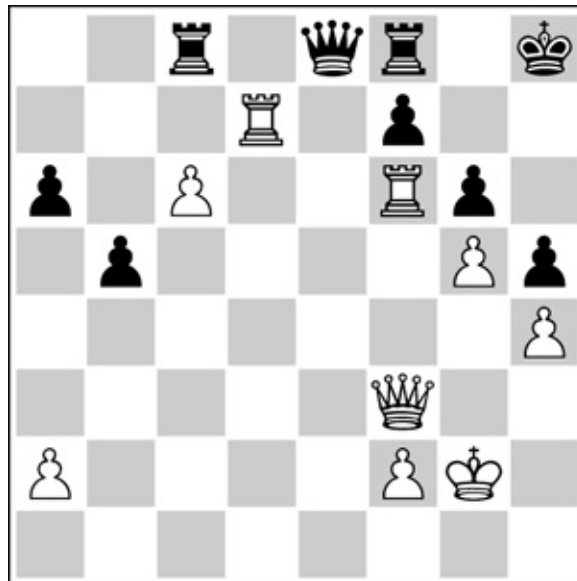
It is vital always to stay alert. Here, 33.Rd7?? would be slightly premature in view of 33...Qxc6, pinning the white queen, so that the planned 34.Qxf7 would not be allowed by the arbiter!

After the text, however, this is a threat.

**33...Rf8**

Black's possession of the e-file has been a short-lived joy. But there were hardly any alternatives.

**34.Rf6 Qe7 35.Rd7 Qe8**



The diagram aptly illustrates the triumph of White's strategy. The pawn on c6 ties the black pieces' hand and foot to the back rank, and the centralized white pieces have succeeded in seriously weakening the black kingside. Now the time has come to reap the harvest.

**36.Rxg6!**

After 36...fxg6, 37.Qc3+ is deadly.

**36...Qe5**

Due to the tense atmosphere in this match (the relations between Petrosian and

Kortchnoi were not exactly friendly), Kortchnoi did not care to resign all too soon.

**37.Qxh5#**

**1-0**

Playing through this tour de force, the reader will have noticed the technical character of the game. Indeed, it is important in positions with only heavy pieces to know how various liquidations to other endgames must be evaluated. For that purpose, some basic knowledge of rook endgames is indispensable. The following game is quite instrumental in getting the reader a little better acquainted with these endgames.

White has a central passed pawn, which he quickly manages to escort to the sixth rank. A little later he succeeds in exchanging the minor pieces, liquidating into a rook ending, where he even gives a pawn in order to activate his king. After that, the fact that his rook is behind the pawn decides the game.

QI 14.18 (E12)

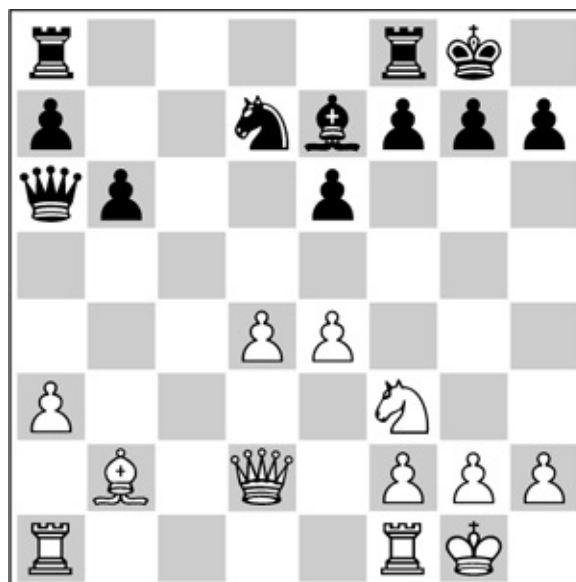
□ **Gelfand, Boris**

■ **Lerner, Konstantin**

Norilsk 1987 (4)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.Nc3 Bb7 5.a3 d5 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.Qc2 Be7 8.e4 Nxc3 9.bxc3 0-0 10.Bd3 c5 11.0-0 Qc8 12.Qe2 cxd4 13.cxd4 Ba6 14.Bb2 Bxd3 15.Qxd3 Qa6 16.Qd2 Nd7**

Again White has a pawn majority in the centre, which he immediately sets in motion.



**17.d5! exd5 18.exd5 Bf6**

From the previous examples we have learned that in principle, Black should keep the minor pieces on the board. But in this case he cannot do without eliminating the dangerous white bishop on b2.

**19.d6!**

Although it seems that the pawn will be weak on this square, Gelfand pushes it forward as quickly as possible. The further this pawn gets, the better it will be for White later on. The justification of this push is that White can keep protecting the pawn with his major pieces, making the pawn a real bone in Black's throat.

**19...Bxb2 20.Qxb2 b5**

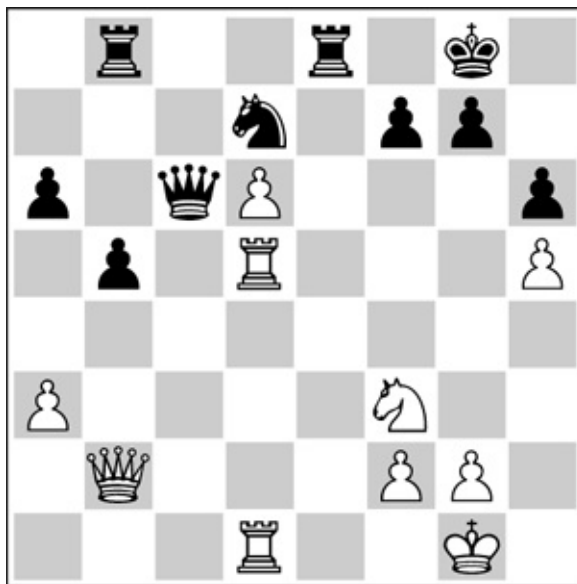
Black also sets his majority in motion, but it will take him an entire game before he can create a passed pawn.

**21.Rad1 Rfe8 22.Rd5 Rab8 23.Rfd1 Qc6 24.h4!**

White rules out possible 'back rank mates' and is also working on the weakening of the enemy king's position. As we have seen before, the presence of his passed pawn combines well with an attack against the opposing monarch.

**24...a6 25.h5**

25.Rg5 was another good idea.

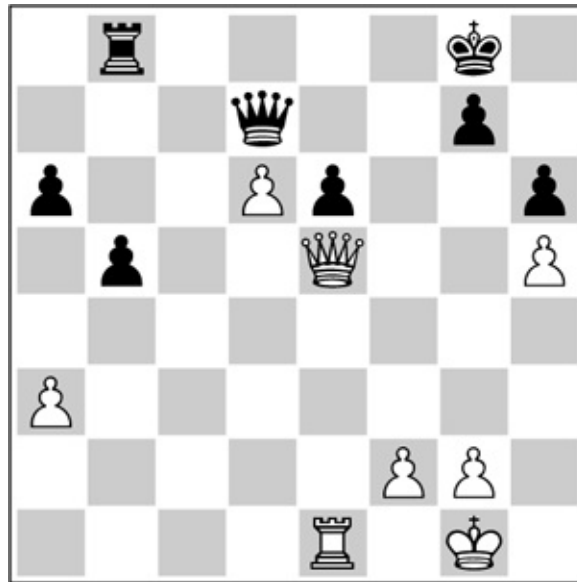
**25...h6****26.Ne5!**

As soon as you know the principle, it will not be hard for you to find this move. The minor pieces are removed from the board, and as a result Black is doomed to complete passivity.

**26...Nxe5 27.Rxe5 Qd7 28.Rde1 Re6!**

Black defends as tenaciously as possible. After 28...Rxe5 29.Qxe5, White would sail in via e7 with great force.

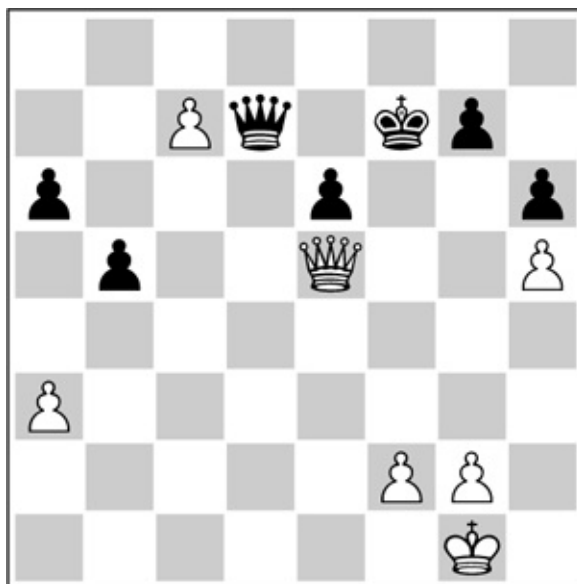
**29.Rxe6fxe6 30.Qe5**



**30...Rd8**

30...b4! was Black's primary chance of salvation: 31.axb4 Rxb4, and White's advantage after 32.Qxe6+ Qxe6 33.Rxe6 Rd4 is too small to really go on playing for a win.

White can punish 30...Re8? (too passive!) with 31.Rc1!. In fact it is plain and simple: the lethal threat is Rc1-c7, and after 31...Rc8 32.Rc7! Rxc7 33.dxc7, in the ensuing queen ending the pawn on the seventh rank will decide. For example: 33...Kf7 (33...Qc6 does not help either in view of 34.f4 a5 35.Kh2 b4 36.axb4 axb4 37.f5 exf5 38.Qe7, and White has edged his way through to the back rank)



Analysis diagram

and now the winning sequence is instructive: 34.Qc3! (in order to prevent counterplay with ...a6-a5) 34...Qc8 35.Kh2, and Black is helpless against the march of the white king.

**31.Rd1**

Supporting the passed pawn. 31.Qxe6 Qxe6 32.Rxe6 a5 leads nowhere.

**31...a5 32.Rd3?!**

More in keeping with the spirit of the position is 32.Qc3!, attacking a5 and conquering the c-file.

**32...Rc8 33.Kh2**

Well-spotted: the white king will play an important part in this endgame!

**33...Rf8 34.Qc3!?**

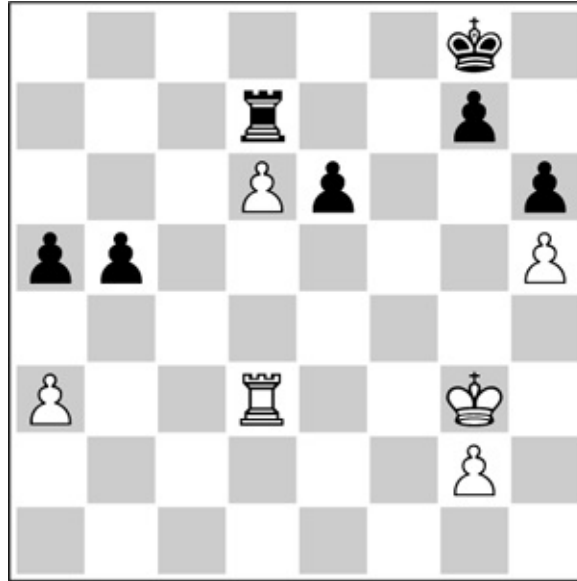
The pawn on d6 is so strong that White can even give up a pawn in order to exchange queens and play for a win.

Here, 34.Qc5 was an excellent alternative.

**34...Rxf2 35.Qc7**

Not 35.Qxa5 on account of 35...Qc6!, and the tables are turned.

**35...Rf7 36.Qxd7 Rxd7 37.Kg3**



As the white rook is placed behind the passed pawn, the black rook is doomed to passivity. White tries to bring his king to the beautiful square e5.

**37...Kf7?!**

Black misses a chance to keep out the white king with 37...e5: 38.Kf3 Kf7

39.Ke4 Ke6, and the game would have ended in a draw.

**38.Kf4 Ke8**

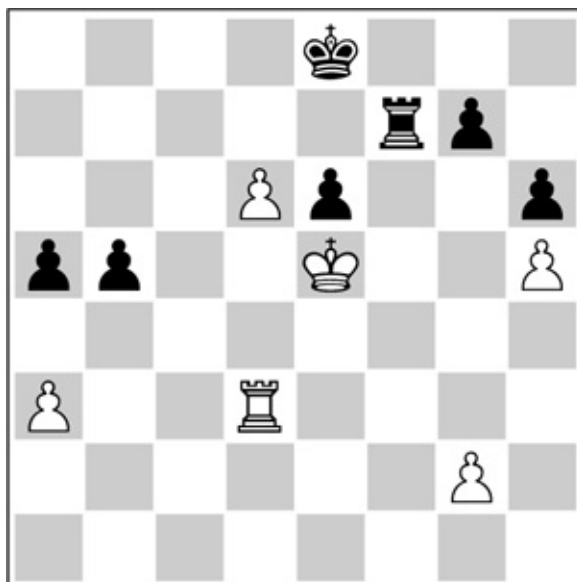
38...Kf6 runs into 39.Ke4 e5 40.Kd5, and the white king intervenes decisively.

**39.Ke5**

It may be hard to believe, but White is still playing for a win! Despite his minus pawn, the position offers him excellent prospects, mainly based, of course, on his strong d-pawn. It is essential that he has placed his rook behind the passed pawn.

**39...Rf7**





Black is following the correct strategy. His king must be placed in front of the pawn, after which he can activate his rook.

**40.Rc3!**

Very accurately played. After 40.Kxe6 Rf6+ 41.Ke5 Kd7, Black would be saved.

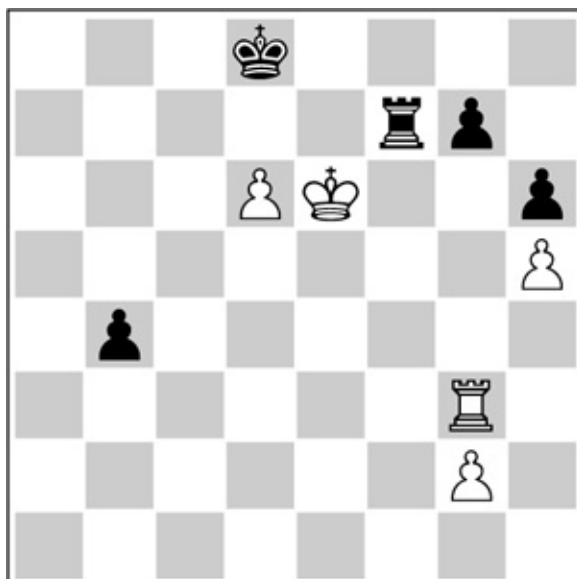
**40...Kd8**

Clearly, 40...Kd7 is not possible on account of 41.Rc7+ Ke8 42.Kxe6.

**41.Kxe6 b4**

Black tries to make use of his own passed pawn in order to counterbalance White's. However, the difference between the two is that White's is supported by its king, and its black colleague is not. Moreover, the black king is stuck on the back rank, which will soon lead to mating patterns.

**42.axb4 axb4 43.Rg3!?**



### 43...Rb7?

The only chance to hold the game lay in stirring up some activity by 43...Rf6+ 44.Ke5 Rf2, as indicated by Gelfand and Kapengut. After the text move, Black soon ends up in a kind of zugzwang position.

### 44.Rg4!!

Brilliantly played! The black rook is tied to the b7-square (to protect the pawns on b4 and g7), whilst his king cannot escape from the back rank either.

### 44...Ke8

On 44...b3 White has prepared 45.Ra4! Rb8 46.Rf4!, after which his pawn gets to the other side first, for example: 46...Kc8 47.Rf8+ Kb7 48.Rxb8+ Kxb8 49.d7 Kc7 50.Ke7.

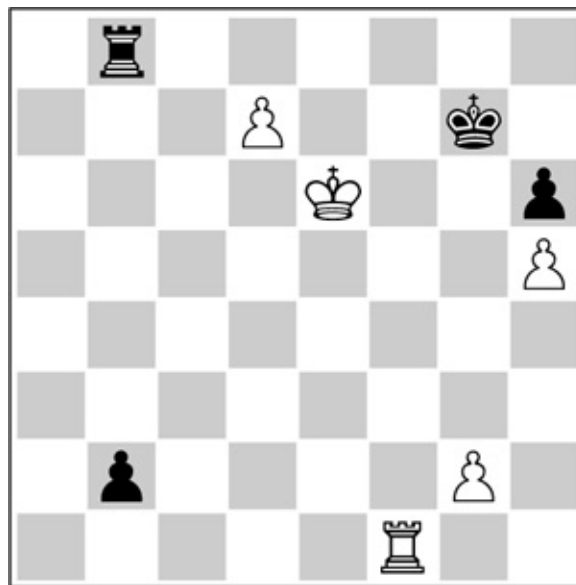
### 45.Rc4 Rb8

After 45...Kd8, the winning line is interesting. Gurevich gives 46.g4 (also possible is 46.Rc5, so as to enable the rook to do its job via the a-file) 46...b3 47.Ra4 Rb8 48.Rf4 Ke8 49.d7+, after which Black can again resign. Now the rook invades on the seventh rank.

### 46.Rc7 b3 47.Rxg7 Kf8 48.Rf7+ Kg8 49.d7

It is instructive to see that the white pawn carries much more weight than its black counterpart. Now that the black king has been driven away from the zone around the promotion square of White's passed pawn, White hardly has to worry about the breakthrough of the little black rascal.

### 49...b2 50.Rf1 Kg7



### 51.Rb1!

Accuracy is required until the very end. Black had set a nice trap: 51.Ke7?? b1Q

52.Rxb1 Rxb1 53.d8Q Re1+, and White would have had to return the queen.

**51...Rb6+52.Ke7 Rb7 53.Ke8 1-0**

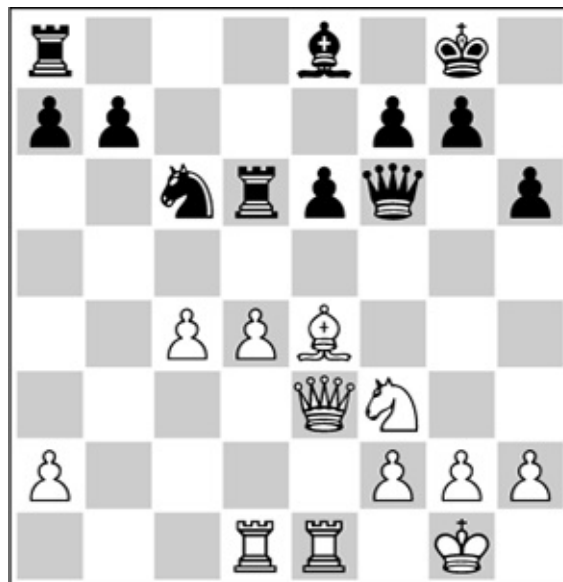
A very admirable technical feat by the Israel-based Byelorussian.

Lest we forget that a passed pawn in the middlegame often brings on certain tactical motifs, we will have a look at the following fragment. Tomashevsky, with white, makes optimal use of the tactics present in the position in order to escort his pawn to the other side.

□ **Tomashevsky, Evgeny**

■ **Iljin, Artem**

Cheboksary ch-RUS jr 2006 (7)



In the diagram position, White has so-called ‘hanging pawns’. The amount of minor and major pieces on the board mostly determines who is better in such cases. In general we can claim that the side with the hanging pawns depends on his attacking chances, and therefore prefers to keep as many pieces on the board as possible. In the diagram position, two minor pieces have been exchanged on both sides, and so it looks as if the black player is in reasonable shape. But now other factors start playing a role!

**18.d5!?exd5**

The alternative 18...Ne7 gives White an advantageous position after 19.dxe6 Rxe6 (19...Rxd1 20.exf7+, with a huge advantage for White) 20.Nd4, in view of, for instance, 20...Rb6 21.c5 Rb2 22.Bc2! Ng6 23.Qa3, and White wins material. Also after 18...Na5, White obtains an advantage with a motif similar to the one in the game.

### 19.cxd5 Ne7 20.Ne5!

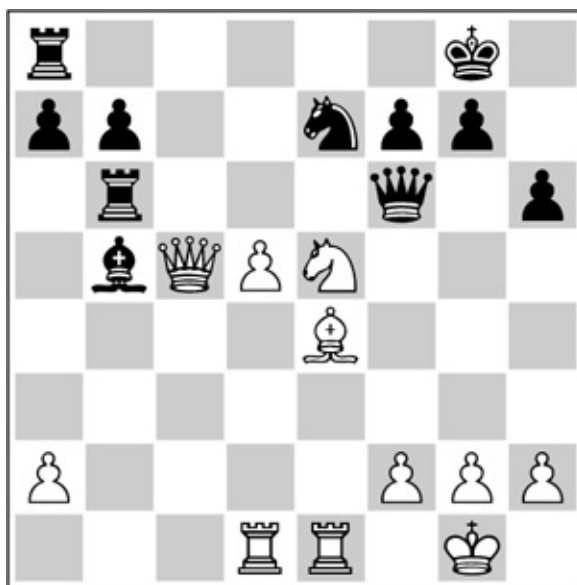
White's piece play is excellent, whereas the pieces in Black's camp are somewhat unfortunately placed. The main threat is 21.Nc4.

### 20...Bb5?

It is understandable that Black wants to parry the threat, but he would have done better to get his last piece into the game: 20...Rad8! 21.Nc4 Ra6 22.d6 b5!?, and nothing is decided yet.

### 21.Qc5 Rb6

The rook has to give up the blockade in front of the passed pawn. On 21...a6, White would strike with 22.Ng4 Qf4 23.g3 b6 24.Qb4, and Black would have to give a considerable amount of material.



### 22.d6

Of course, White immediately sets his passed pawn in motion. The closer this pawn is to the back rank, the more trouble it will make for Black's defence.

### 22...Ng6 23.Bxg6

Simplest: White exchanges minor pieces (i.e., potential blockaders) and pushes the pawn further forward. Curiously, he could have forced a win with 23.Nxf7!? as well. In the main line it is again the passed pawn that brings him the win: 23...Kxf7 24.Bd5+Kf8 25.d7+Ne7 26.Bc4!.

### 23...fxg6 24.d7

Also here, the passed pawn decides the game in White's favour.

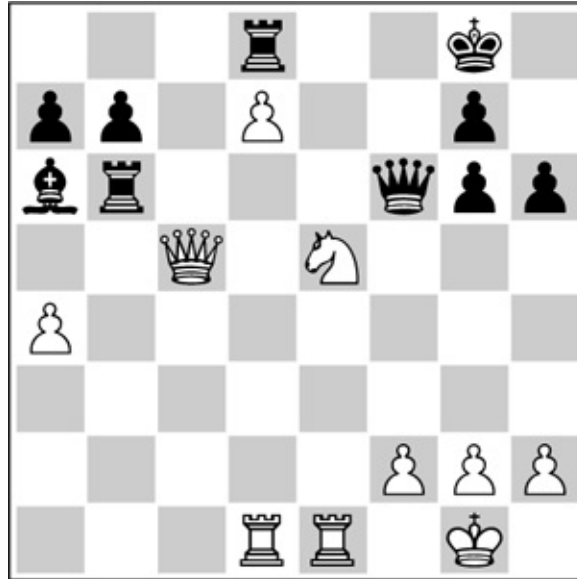
### 24...Rd8 25.a4

With this pretty tactical motif, White drives the bishop away from b5. The thought behind this is that this bishop indirectly covers the e8-square, which is exactly the square that White wants to use.

### 25...Ba6

The alternatives also lose: 25...Bxa4 26.Qc4+, and White wins; or 25...Bc6 26.Nxc6 Rxc6 27.Re8+ Kh7 28.Qd5.

With a pawn on the seventh rank, it is no coincidence that the position contains a combination. And indeed, Tomashevsky manages to unearth it.



### 26.Nxg6!

With this powerful move White not only wins a pawn, but he also clears the way for his rook on e1 (to square e8!). By the way, White could also have won with 26.Qc7 Kh7 27.Nf7.

### 26...Kh7

Black wants to evade the checks with his king. After 26...Qxg6 27.Qc8 (27.Qe7 is not a bad move either!) 27...Qf6, 28.Re8+decides.

### 27.Ne5

White saves the knight and prepares for the final chord.

With 27.Nf8+!?, White could have unexpectedly given a devastating check!

After 27...Rxf8 28.Re8 Rd6 29.Qc2+ Kh8 (29...Bd3 30.Rxd3+-) 30.Rxd6 Qxd6 31.Rxf8+ Qxf8 32.Qc8, again, the passed d-pawn would have decided the issue.

### 27...Re6 28.Qd5 Re7 29.h3

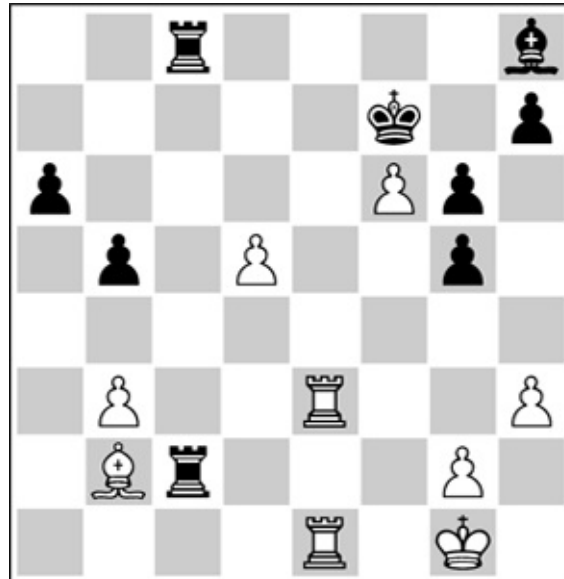
White is not in a hurry; his pawn is terribly strong.

### 29...b6 30.Qe4+ Kg8 31.Ng4

1-0

## Exercises

6.1



White has two beautiful passed pawns on f6 and d5, but it seems as if Black has managed to create counterplay just in time with ...Rc2. How can White make quick progress nonetheless?

[Solution](#)

6.2



Which move is to be preferred? Make your choice:

- A) **29.Rxe8+**
- B) **29.Ne5**
- C) **29.Qd2**
- D) **29.h4.**

[Solution](#)

6.3



With which tactical move did White take the game in hand?

[Solution](#)



6.4



It is clear that the giant passed pawn on d6, in cooperation with the white pieces, should be able to force a quick decision. Remarkably enough, Black appears to have sufficient defensive resources available after all. How can White escort the pawn to the other side in a creative way? Give a few variations to confirm your idea.

[Solution](#)

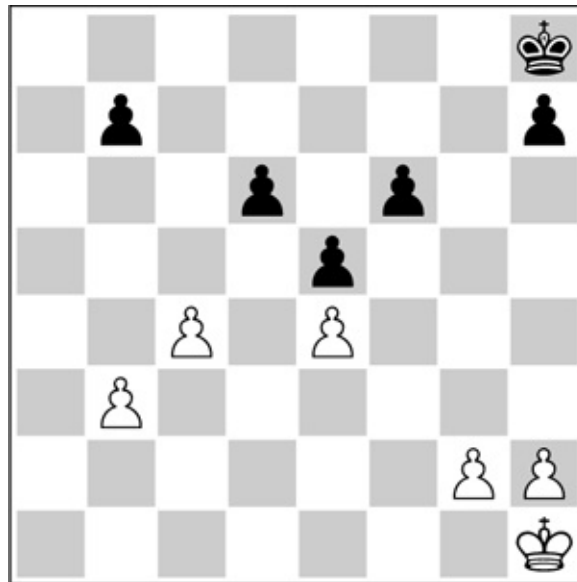
## Chapter 7

# Weak pawns

### 7.1 Introduction

In a chess game, the movements of the pieces are largely determined by the pawn structure. We can regard the pawn skeleton as the backbone of the position, on which everything else is hung. It is as if the pawns indicate on which files the rooks should be placed, where the pieces should go, and also where they have no business.

There is yet another important detail that we can read from the positions of the pawns, namely where the weaknesses are situated. A diagram will serve to clarify this.



### 7.2 Definitions

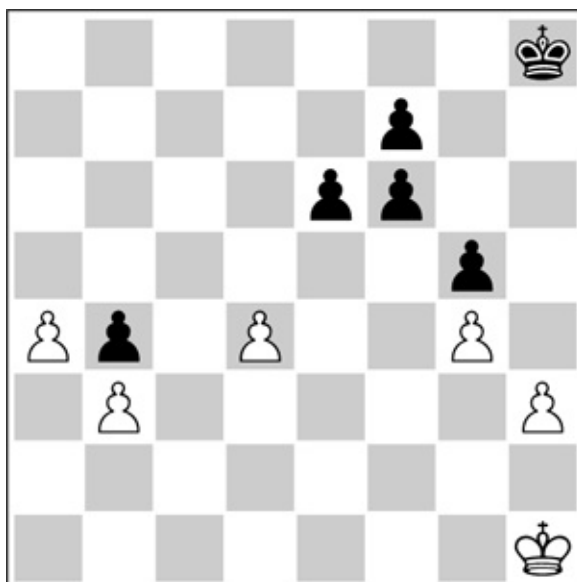
Let us formulate these features into a practical concept:

**Definition:**

- A backward pawn is a pawn standing on a half-open file, which cannot be protected by its pawn colleagues and which also has no pawn colleagues next to it. This makes the square in front of this pawn weak, and the opponent can take firm control of it.

Therefore, a backward pawn is a major source of concern, but there are also

other kinds of pawns that we call weak. In the following diagram it is not hard to point out several weaknesses.



A) A protected passed pawn (a4) is in principle a strong pawn, and especially in pawn endings it is a lethal weapon.

B) An isolated pawn in the centre (d4) is principally weak, since it can easily be attacked by the opponent. However, in many positions it functions as a means of attack, since the pieces can be arranged behind it and the pawn controls important strong-points in the centre.

C) A pawn on a (half-) open file is in principle a target, since it cannot expect any support from its 'little brothers'. Still, there is always the hope that it can be pushed forward and, as a result, free itself from its status (in the diagram position Black hopes to achieve the push ...f6-f5, after which he will have solved the weakness on f6).

The pawn on b4 is not on an open file, but nevertheless it can become a prey for the enemy minor pieces, since it is more or less fixed, and its immobility makes it a target.

D) The plight of the backward pawn (h3) is in principle the worst. It has no support; and pushing it forward is practically impossible, since the opponent controls the square in front of it.

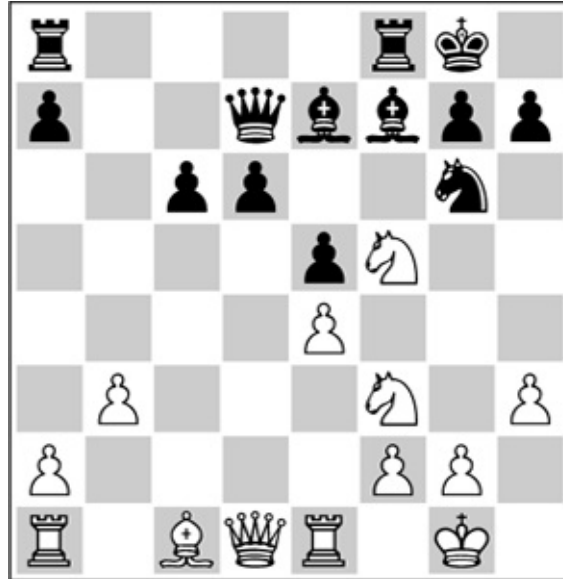
From the above argument we can conclude that pawns on half-open files can be regarded as potential weaknesses. Between them, the backward pawn is most in need of support.

Let's have a look at an example from practice.

□ Hecht, Hans-Joachim

■ Forint, Gyözo

Wijk aan Zee 1974 (2)



In the diagram position, the black pawns on c6 and d6 are on half-open files for White. At first sight, Black does not seem to be in bad shape. His pawns do not look weak yet, and in certain circumstances they could even be moved forward. Now it is up to White to make sure that this does not happen, and that the defending pieces are eliminated. This explains the following action:

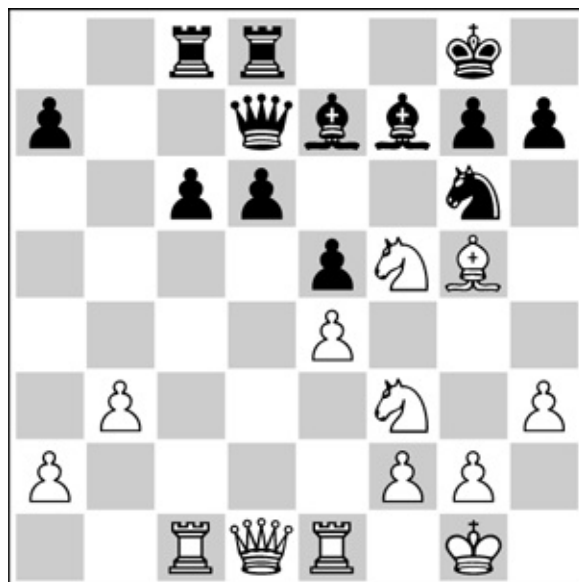
**1.Bg5!**

A very strong move – much better than the obvious 1.Nxe7+. White has correctly seen that his knight is doing a good job on the outpost f5, accentuating the weakness of – especially – the d-pawn.

**1...Rfd8 2.Rc1**

2.Qc2 also deserved consideration.

**2...Rac8**



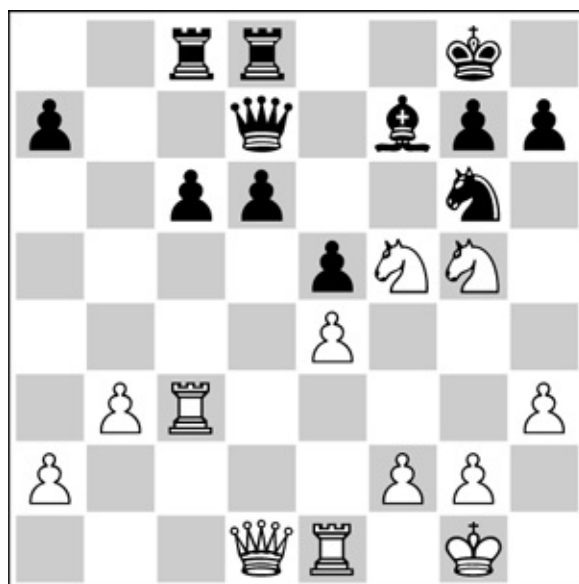
### 3.Rc3!

A multi-functional move. White is ready to prepare a doubling or even a tripling on either the d- or the c-file. Obviously White does not exchange on e7 himself, leaving it up to his opponent to do this. By the way, 3.Re3 would also have achieved the same aim.

### 3...Bxg5

With the text move Black activates the white cavalry, but the alternative 3...h6?! was even worse. White would achieve a huge advantage with 4.Bxe7 Nxe7 5.Rd3 Nxf5 6.Nxe5.

### 4.Nxg5



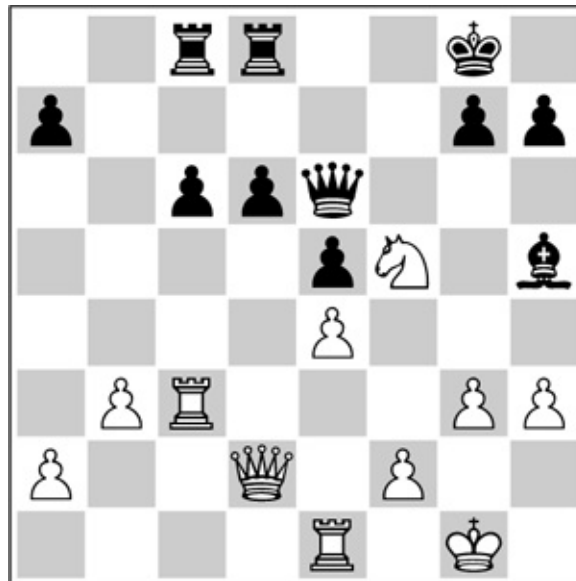
### 4...Nf4

Black realizes that he cannot survive by normal means. After 4...Ne7 5.Nxf7 Kxf7 6.Nxe7 Kxe7 his king is, as it were, drawn to the unsafe centre, after which White has various methods to obtain a huge advantage (the best possibility after 6...Qxe7 seems to be 7.Rxc6! Rxc6 8.Qd5+, and White wins a crucial pawn): 7.Qh5 h6 8.Rg3 Rg8 (after 8...Kf8 9.Ree3!, the white initiative is killing) 9.Qh4+ Ke8 and now both 10.Rd1 and 10.Rg6 are virtually winning. Another possibility is 4...Be8, but after 5.Qg4 d5 6.h4 d4 7.Rc5, the black formation has also become weak. The protected passed pawn on d4 does not balance this disadvantage, since White exerts enormous pressure on the king-side (and also on the e5 pawn).

### 5.g3 Bh5

There was nothing reasonable to be found anymore. Also after 5...Ne6 6.Nxf7 Kxf7 7.Rd3, things would get out of hand for Black, as now a pawn is lost: 7...d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.Rxe5. Here Black turns out to succumb to the weakness of his centre pawns. After the text move, by the way, the game is over as well.

### 6.Qd2 Ne6 7.Nxe6 Qxe6



### 8.Qg5

And Black resigned in view of the triple threat of 9.Qxg7#, 9.Qxh5 and 9.Ne7+. It was striking how much trouble Black turned out to have with his pawns in this game. With a few well-aimed 'shots', White was able to ruin the black stronghold.

## 7.3 Manoeuvring against weak pawns

It is not usual for the weakness of one or more pawns to be exposed in just a few moves' time. The player who possesses such an advantage often has to

manoeuvre quite cautiously, and only in the distant future will he be able to reap the fruits of a well-conducted strategy.

It is known that a backward pawn on a half-open file first has to be carefully blocked before it can be targeted. The reason for this is simple: the superior side wants the weakness to be fixed as deeply as possible in the opponent's camp, so that the latter will also suffer from a dire lack of space. In the following fragment we see how gradually the winning process develops.

□ **Spassky, Boris**

■ **Averbakh, Yury**

Kharkov 1963



In this position, White has the superior pawn structure. The pawn on d4 will fall into his hands shortly, after which Black is saddled with the weakness of d6.

**1.Bxf6 Qxf6 2.Nxd4 Ne5**

To 2...Nc5, 3.Rc1 is presumably the best reply. White brings his last piece into the game and maintains the pressure on Black's position.

To 2...Bb7, 3.Nf5 is a strong answer. White exchanges his b2 pawn for the d6 pawn with 3...Qxb2 4.Nxd6, which, after 4...Nc5 5.e5, leads to a very promising position. The white pieces are cooperating well, whereas any coordination between Black's pieces is completely lacking. Also, the black king position lies abandoned, and therefore an attack on the king wouldn't be appearing out of thin air.

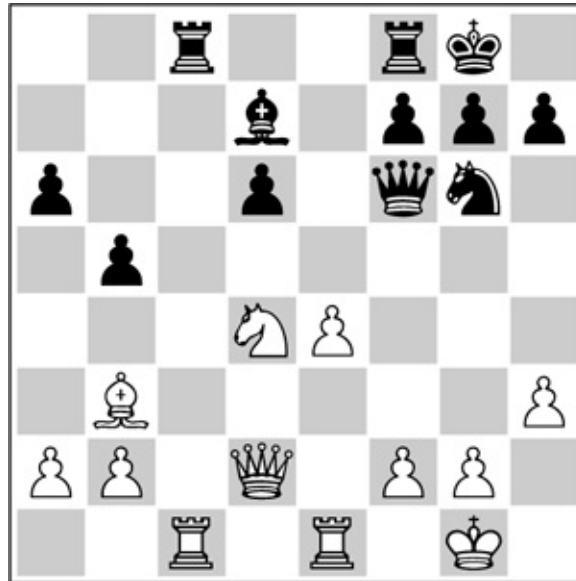
**3.Bb3 Bd7 4.Rc1**

Looking at the further course of the game, we could ask ourselves whether the

immediate 4.Qd2 should not have been preferred. After 4...Rac8 5.Rad1, White has an extra tempo compared to the game.

**4...Rac8 5.Qd2 Ng6**

In view of the comment to the previous move, 5...Rxc1 would have been more natural. After 6.Rxc1 Rc8, 7.Rd1 is the customary continuation.



**6.Rcd1!**

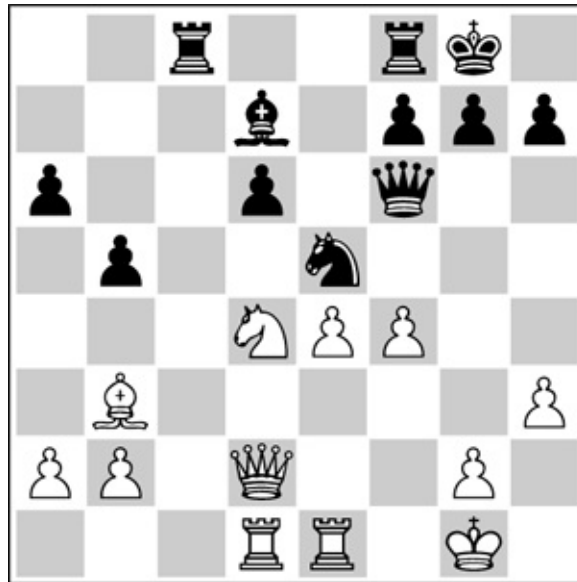
An instructive move. To be able to put pressure on a weak pawn, White is helped by keeping the heavy pieces on the board. If we had only minor pieces on the board in this position, then White's advantage would be virtually negligible.

**6...Ne5?!**

Black would have done better to activate his king's rook with 6...Rfe8.

**7.f4**





### 7...Nc4

A quite obvious move, but the question is whether the exchange of the white bishop for this knight is so advantageous for Black. However, the alternatives did not look very rosy either. After 7...Nc6?!, White would exchange one advantage for another with 8.Nxc6 Bxc6 9.e5 dxe5 10.fxe5 Qe7 11.e6 f6. Now he has eliminated Black's weakness, but the white passed pawn is incredibly strong, and with 12.Qd7! he demonstrates that the position already contains a combination. A possible continuation is 12...Rfe8 13.Rc1!, and White wins a decisive amount of material.

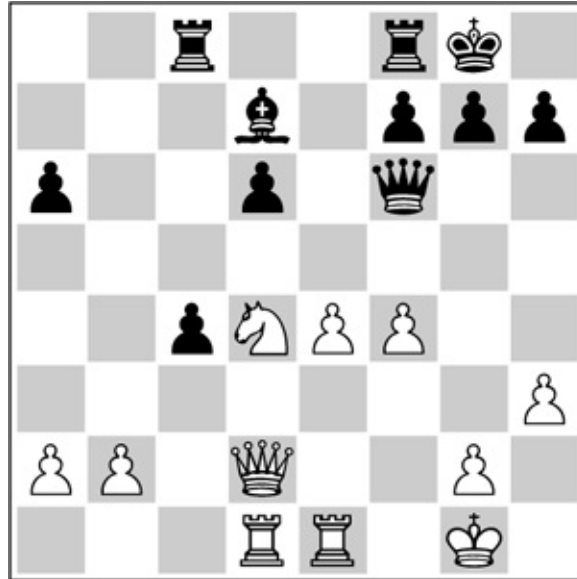
It looks as if 7...Ng6 is still playable, but then White would obtain a large positional advantage with 8.Ne2!. He then threatens 9.e5, and on 8...Bc6 White would cash in a pawn with 9.f5! Ne5 10.Qxd6 Qxd6 11.Rxd6.

### 8.Bxc4 bxc4

This is no bed of roses for Black, as he is saddled with a new weakness. Moreover, his bishop has become bad.

After 8...Rxc4, Black would also have been in big trouble: 9.b3 Rc7 10.Nf3 Rc6 11.e5, and the weak pawn already falls into White's hands. The tactical trick 11...Qg6 12.exd6 Rc2 (12...Bxh3? 13.Ne5) is refuted by 13.Nh4! Rxd2 14.Nxg6 Rxd1 15.Ne7+ Kh8 16.Rxd1, and White wins.

After the text move Black is left with a destroyed pawn structure.



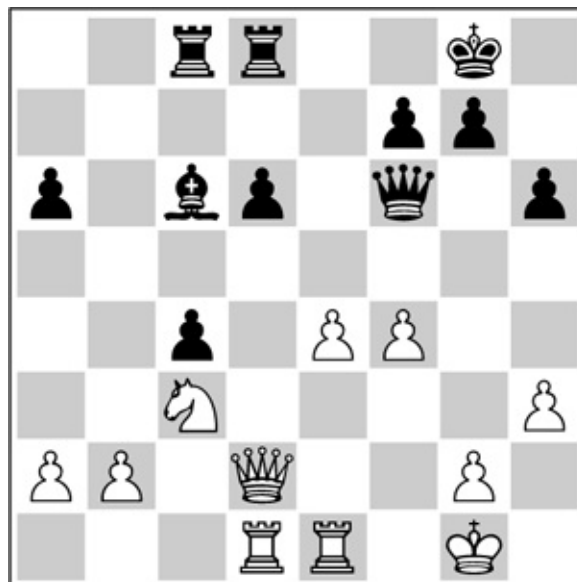
### 9.Ne2!

A clever move. White plays the knight to the beautiful square c3, where it will fix the pawn on c4 and control the square d5. Also, the d-file is opened, so the pressure on d6 can be increased.

### 9...Ba4

Keeping the damage within bounds.

**10.Rc1 Rfd8 11.Nc3 Bc6 12.Rcd1 h6**

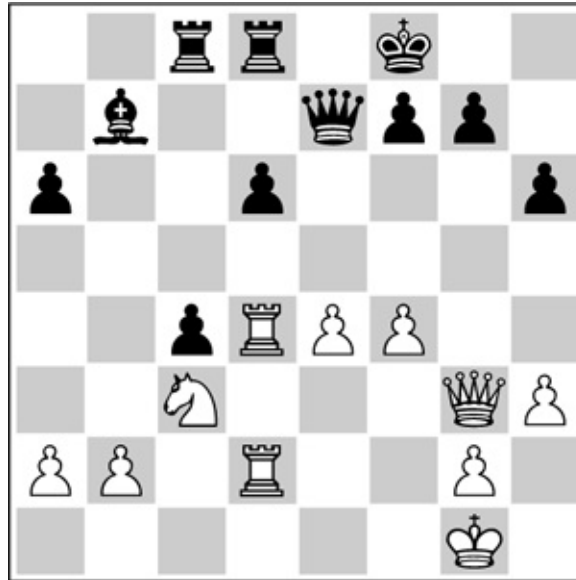


### 13.Qe3!

This move emphasizes that Black cannot do a thing anymore. White can take his time to increase the pressure on the d6 pawn, and in the meantime he centralizes his queen, which can later keep an eye on the d6 pawn from g3.

By leaving the d-file with his queen, Spas sky also makes a doubling of rooks on this file possible.

**13...Rb8 14.Re2 Rbc8 15.Rd4 Bb7 16.Red2 Qe7 17.Qg3 Kf8**



**18.f5!**

In a higher sense, this move decides the game. Although White marks his own pawn on e4 as a backward pawn, the attack on the weak d6 pawn cannot be dealt with anymore. Thus, 18...Rc6 is met by 19.e5, and now it becomes clear why the presence of the heavy pieces works in White's favour. The pressure on the d-file will be Black's undoing.

**18...Re8 19.Rxd6**

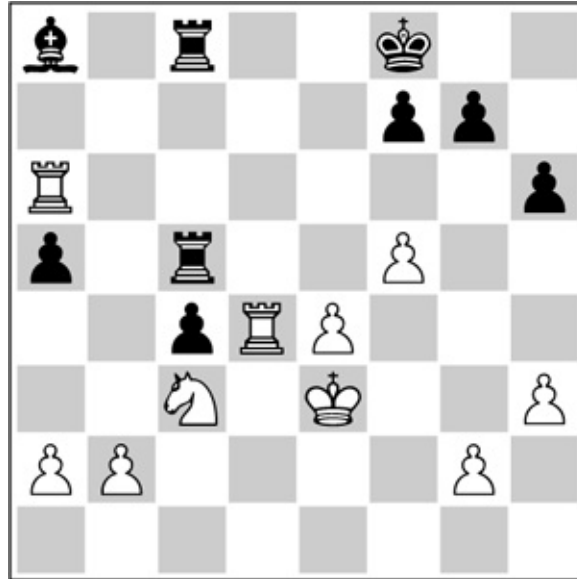
The first harvest is gathered.

**19...Qe5**

Black seeks refuge in an endgame, hoping that he will be able to save a half point there. 19...Bxe4 20.f6! gxf6 21.Re2 would also have been disastrous for him.

**20.Qxe5 Rxe5 21.R2d4 a5 22.Rb6 Ba8 23.Ra6 Ke8 24.Kf2 Kf8 25.Ke3 Rec5**

Now that White has stabilized his central position, he can start a search for new advantages.



### **26.Rd7**

Also not bad was 26.Na4!, winning at least a second pawn: 26...R5c6 (26...Rb5 27.Nb6) 27.Rxa5 or also 27.Rxc6.

### **26...Bc6 27.Rda7a4**

Black's problems are piling up. Besides the fact that he is a pawn down, his queenside pawns must move to squares of the wrong colour, making the dark squares available to the white pieces.

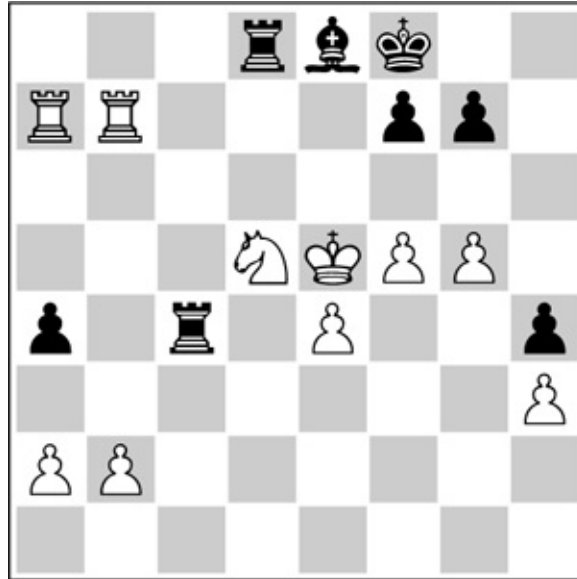
### **28.Kd4 Be8 29.Rb6**

It is remarkable that White is not interested in a four-rook endgame with two extra pawns after 29.Nxa4 Bxa4 30.Rxa4; probably because Black could then have developed a small trace of counterplay with 30...c3, even though objectively it does not promise him much.

### **29...h5 30.g4 h4 31.Rbb7 R5c6 32.Nd5 Rd8 33.g5 Rcd6**

Slowly the net around the black king is drawn tighter, and so Black decides to put a second pawn on offer.

### **34.Kxc4 Rc6+ 35.Kd4 Rc2 36.Ke5 Rc4**



**37.g6**

The decision. White forces an opening of the seventh rank, enabling his rooks to start a mating offensive.

**37...f6+ 38.Nxf6!**

Of course. The last remains of Black's protective wall are mopped up.

**38...gxf6+ 39.Kxf6 Rc6+ 40.Kg5**

Black resigns, since there is no remedy to the threat of 41.Rh7 Kg8 42.Rag7+ Kf8 43.Kh6!, and the mate threat 44.Rh8 cannot be averted.

In the following game we see another model achievement by former World Champion Boris Spassky, in which he takes aim at a weak pawn on d6.

RL 9.10 (C73)

□ Spassky, Boris

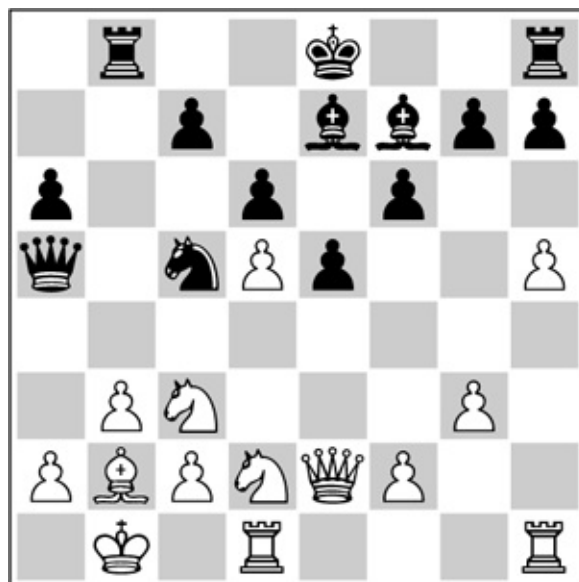
■ Lutikov, Anatoly

Moscow tt 1979

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 d6 5.Bxc6+ bxc6 6.d4 f6**

In the 19th game of the controversial PC A World Championship match between Kasparov and Short in 1993, Black opted for 6...exd4.

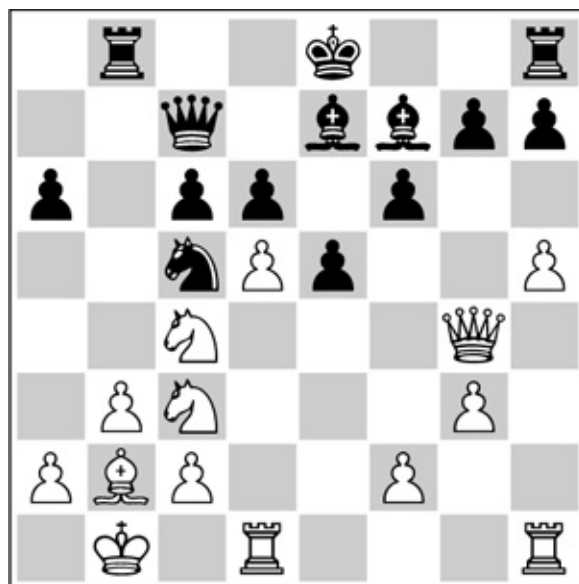
**7.Be3 Ne7 8.Nc3 Ng6 9.Qe2 Be6 10.0-0-0 Qb8 11.Kb1 Qb7 12.Bc1 Be7 13.g3 Rb8 14.b3 Bf7 15.h4 Nf8 16.h5 Ne6 17.d5 Nc5 18.Ba3 Qb6 19.Nd2 cxd5 20.exd5 Qa5 21.Bb2**



### 21...c6?

Just what White was waiting for. In an attempt to bring his bishop pair to life, Black opens up the position. He does not realize that from now on he will be stuck with a weak pawn on an open file, while White obtains control of the strong d5-square as well (see also Chapter 9).

### 22.Nc4 Qc7 23.Qg4



### 23...cxd5?

This exchange will result in strategic bankruptcy. It compels Black to give up his good bishop, saddling him up with weakened light squares in the centre and a backward pawn. The attack that he was dreaming of obviously never gets off the ground.

### 24.Nxd5 Bxd5 25.Rxd5 0-0

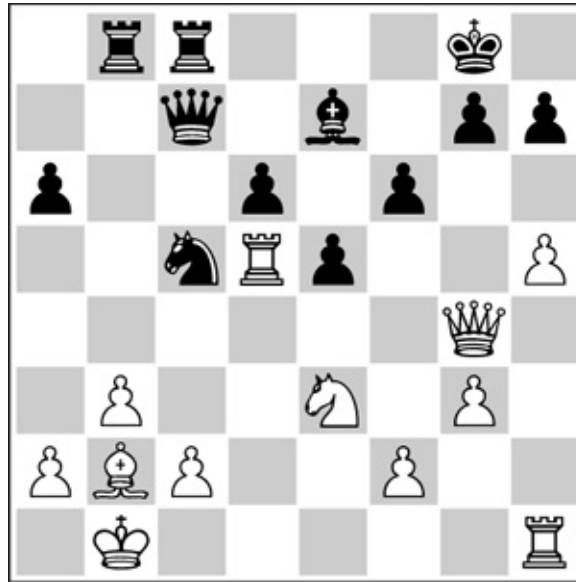
Please compare this position with the one we had a few moves ago. White now holds all the trumps and Black has to sit and watch.

### 26.Ne3

White prevents counterplay with 26...f5.

### 26...Rfc8

Relatively better was 26...Rfd8, but also after that move Black would not have a lot to hope for.



### 27.Ba3!

This move has a double intention. With 28.Bxc5, White threatens to force the notorious ending of good knight versus bad bishop, and at the same time he targets the weak d6 pawn.

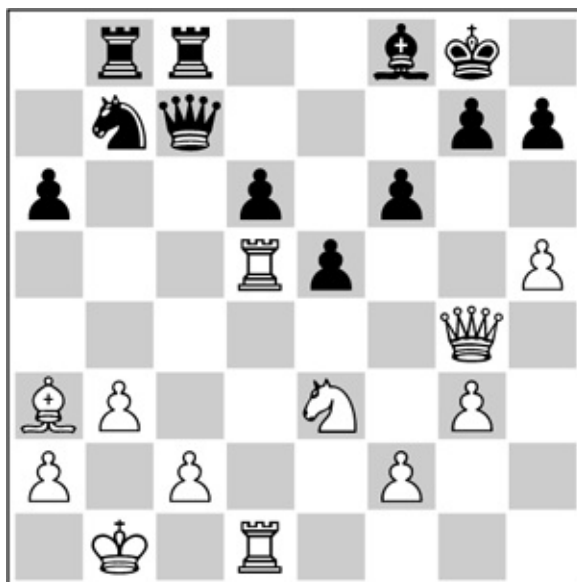
### 27...Nb7

27...Nb7? runs into 28.Qe6+ Kf8 29.Nf5 Qxc2+ 30.Ka1, and White wins. After the text you might ask what is worse: the good knight versus bad bishop ending, or putting the knight on this horrible square.

### 28.Rhd1

28.c4 is also a thematic move. White fixes the weakness of the d5-square permanently, and prepares to further exploit the weakness of d6 (and the light squares).

### 28...Bf8



### 29.R1d2!?

A great little move. The only weak point in White's own position is c2, which he now gives extra protection, and at the same time Spassky vacates the d1-square for his queen, in order to maximize the pressure on d6.

### 29...Kh8 30.Nc4

Also worthy of consideration was 30.Nf5 Rd5 31.f4.

### 30...Rd8 31.Qd1 Rbc8

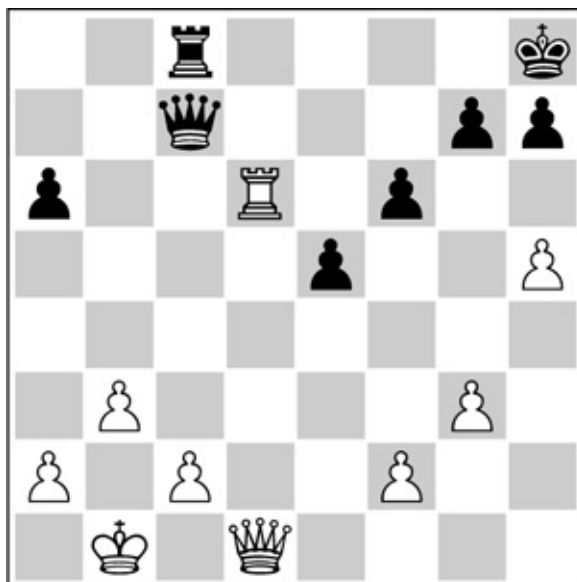
Black does not resign himself to his fate. The pawn on d6 could not be protected anymore, and he is hoping for counter-play along the c-file.

### 32.Nxd6

As the saying goes: you reap what you sow. White has built up optimally and he now garners the first harvest of his superior strategy.

### 32...Nxd6 33.Bxd6 Bxd6 34.Rxd6 Rxd6 35.Rxd6





### 35...h6

Black is forced to give up a second pawn, since after 35...a5 36.Rd7 Qb6 37.h6! g6 (37...Rg8 is strongly met by 38.Qd5, after which there is no defence against 39.hxg7+ Rxc7 40.Rd8+ and mate) 38.Qd5 Rf8 (the threat was 39.Qf7) 39.Rf7! Rd8 40.Qd7!, Black is definitively crushed due to the weakness of the seventh and eighth rank.

### 36.Rxa6

To all intents and purposes Black could have quietly resigned here, but it is instructive to watch how Spassky hauls in the loot.

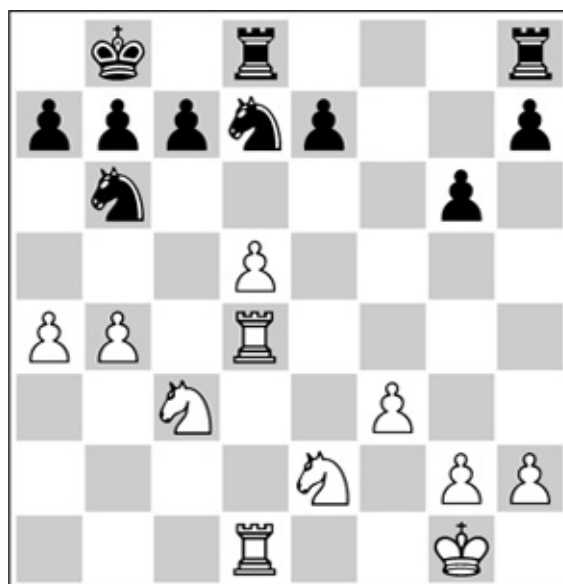
**36...Rd8 37.Qf3 Rc8 38.Qd3 Rd8 39.Qe4 f5 40.Qxf5 Qc3 41.Rxh6+ gxh6 42.Qf6+Kh7 43.Qe7+**

**1-0**

□ Comas Fabrego,Luis

■ Markowski, Tomasz

Istanbul Ech 2003 (3)



## 25.Nf4

White boasts several positional advantages here. Especially due to his vulnerable pawn structure (the weakness of the e7 pawn), Black has huge problems.

Additionally, White possesses an enormous space advantage.

When playing against a weak pawn, it is essential to keep the square in front of this pawn firmly under control, to prevent the opponent from freeing himself.

The white manoeuvres must be aimed at permanent control of the square e6.

Besides this, he can try to provoke further weaknesses in the enemy camp.

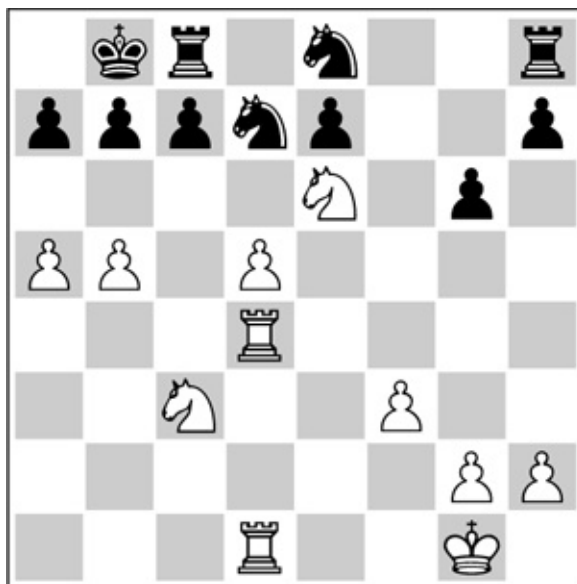
## 25...Nf6

Better is 25...Nf8, but then also, White would obtain an advantage with 26.a5 Nc8 27.Ne4 Nd6 28.Nc5, and the weak e6-square is firmly under control.

## 26.Ne6 Rc8

Another defence was 26...Rd7. After 27.a5 Nc8 28.Re1, White again targets the e7 pawn. Although the latter is well protected at this point, the passivity of Black's pieces is a great problem. For example: 28...b6 (to rule out Nc5) 29.g4 Rg8 30.g5 Nh5 31.Rh4, and White gets ready for the manoeuvre Ne6-d4-c6, putting more pressure on the e7 pawn.

## 27.a5 Nbd7 28.b5 Ne8



### **29.a6!**

With this push, White conquers the c6-square for one of his knights.

### **29...bxa6**

Or 29...b6 30.Re4 Nd6 31.Re2, and again the knight arrives on c6, after which the e7 pawn is sentenced to death.

### **30.Ra4!**

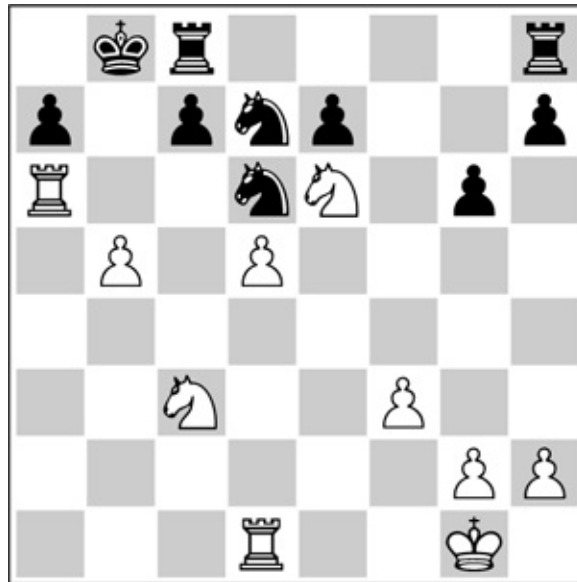
With this elegant pseudo-sacrifice, White also creates chances against the black king.

By the way, 30.bxa6 would not have been bad either, for instance: 30...Nef6 31.Rc4, again followed by Ne6-d4-c6.

### **30...Nd6**

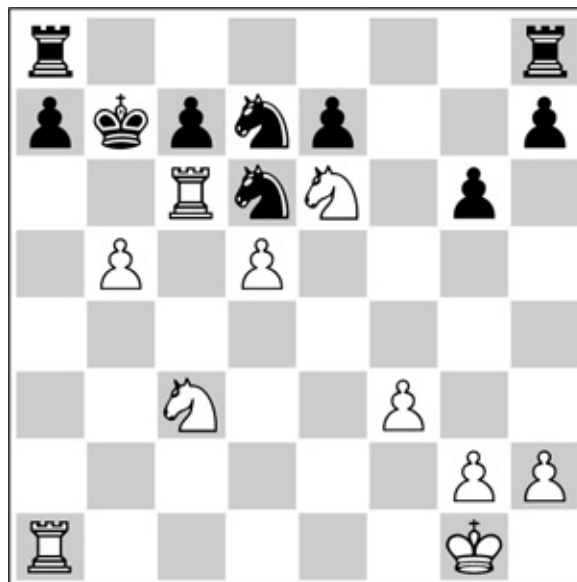
After 30...axb5 31.Nxb5, White is already winning. Black cannot prevent Rxa7, after which mating variations are not far off

### **31.Rxa6**



In a higher sense White is already winning here as well. Black has three weak pawns now, and on top of this the vulnerable position of his king will make him suffer. Please note the difference with the white pawns on b5 and d5, which could also be labelled as potential weaknesses – after all they are isolated as well. But because of White’s surplus in space and activity, Black will in no way be able to focus on these weaknesses. He already has more than enough on his plate keeping his own position together.

**31...Kb7 32.Rda1 Ra8 33.Rc6**



**33...Rac8**

To the rather unappealing alternative 33...Rhc8, White has the elegant reply 34.Na4. Now, 34...Kb8 is forced (the pawn grab 34...Nxb5 is punished by

35.Nac5+ Nxc5 36.Nxc5+ Kb8 37.Na6+ Kb7 38.Rb1, and White wins a piece). White continues with 35.Nac5 Nxc5 36.Nxc5 Nf5 37.Na6+ Kb7, and now turns to the other side of the board again with 38.Re1!, again targeting the original weakness in Black's position: pawn e7! In view of the threat of g2-g4, Black will have to relinquish that pawn, after which the race is run.

38.Re1! is much better than 38.Rac1, because then Black could untie himself with 38...Nd4 39.Rxc7+ Rxc7 40.Rxc7+ Kb6.

### **34.Na4 Kb8 35.Ra6**

Comas Fabrego's play remains to the point.

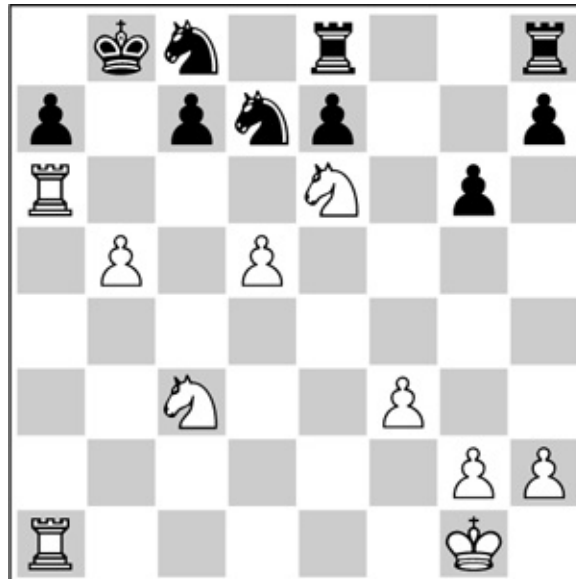
### **35...Rce8**

Playing this position must have been real torture for the black player.

### **36.Nc3**

Curiously, this retreat is once again the strongest continuation.

### **36...Nc8**



### **37.Rc6?!**

Winning a second pawn, after which the win is within reach. However, there was an even better move: 37.Na2!, and now Black is helpless in the face of the entry of the knight via the square c6. The consequences could be, for example: 37... Nf6 38.Nb4 Nd7 39.Nc6+ Kb7, and now the formidable blockade sacrifice 40.b6!! would, after 40...axb6, lead to a pretty mating position: 41.Ra7+ Nxa7 42.Rxa7+ Kc8 43.Rxc7#.

### **37...Nf6 38.Rxc7 Rd8 39.Nxd8**

Perhaps a little too greedy, and it does not make the technical finish easier. It seems better to continue 39.Rc6 Rd7 40.Nc5 Rdd8 41.Na6+ Ka8, and now the black pieces are wrong-footed with the pretty pawn sacrifice 42.b6, for example:

42...Nxb6 43.Nc5 Nc8 44.Nb5 Nxd5 (other moves also lose) 45.Rxc8+ Rxc8  
46.Rxa7+Kb8 47.Na6#.

**39...Kxc7 40.Nc6 Kd6**

Better was 40...Kb6.

**41.Nxa7 Kc5**

41...Nxd5 is not possible in view of the loss of material after 42.Ra6+ Ke5  
43.Nc6+ Kd6 44.Nxe7+ Kxe7 45.Nxd5+, and converting his two extra pawns  
should not be a problem for White.

**42.Nc6**

Also interesting is 42.Ne4+!? Kxd5 43.Rd1+ Ke6 44.Nc5+ Kf7 45.Nc6 Nb6  
46.Ne5+, and the white pieces are optimally placed to convert his extra pawn.

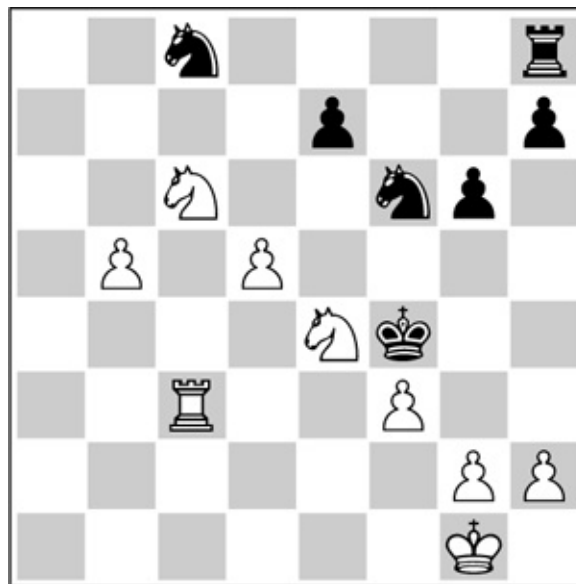
**42...Kc4 43.Rc1 Kd3?\* 44.Ne4?!**

The white player has some problems with the technical conclusion of this  
endgame. There were more natural moves, like 44.Kf2 or 44.Na4.

**44...Ke3?**

Finally the black player caves in. His only fighting chance consisted of 44...  
Nxe4! 45.fxe4 (less good is 45.Nb4+ Kd4 46.fxe4 Kxe4 47.Rc6 Nd6 48.b6 Ra8,  
and Black has counterplay, as indicated by Khuzman) 45...Kxe4 46.Rd1 Rf8,  
and White is close to winning, but he still has one or two things to prove.

**45.Rc3+ Kf4**



**46.Rd3**

This is the move any human would play. The silicon monster almost  
immediately comes up with a way to drive the black king into a mating net:  
46.g3+! Kf5 47.g4+ Kf4 48.Nf2!! Kg5 49.h4+ Kxh4 (otherwise White wins a  
knight) 50.f4, and mate on h3 is inevitable.

#### 46...Re8

46...Nxe4 47.fxe4 Kxe4 48.Rd4+ Ke3, and Black is still alive.

#### 47.Kf2

There is nothing wrong with this move, but again White had sort of a mating line here: 47.Nc5! Kg5 48.Ne6+ Kh6 49.f4, with Rh3 to follow.

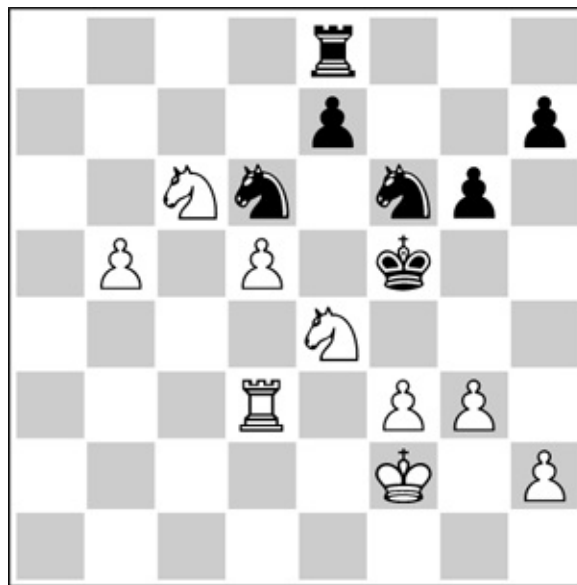
#### 47...Nd6

Nothing can help Black anymore: 47...Nxe4+ 48.fxe4 Kxe4 49.Rd4+ Kf5 50.g4+ Kg5 51.Kg3, and White wins.

#### 48.g3+

Finally the white player is going after the main prey!

#### 48...Kf5



49.g4+! Kf4

49...Nxg4+ 50.fxg4+Kxe4 51.Rd4#.

50.Nxd6exd6 51.h4!

1-0

#### Postscript:

At first sight, the main motif in this endgame was the hunt for the black king. Indeed, the mating lines were plentiful, but that had everything to do with the crippled pawn structure Black had to work with; not in the least because this forced him to move his pieces to passive squares to protect these weak pawns, but also in view of the fact that the white pieces could make optimal use of the 'Swiss cheese' that Black's position had become. The white knights could dance so elegantly through the position mainly thanks to the defects in Black's pawn structure!

## Exercises

7.1

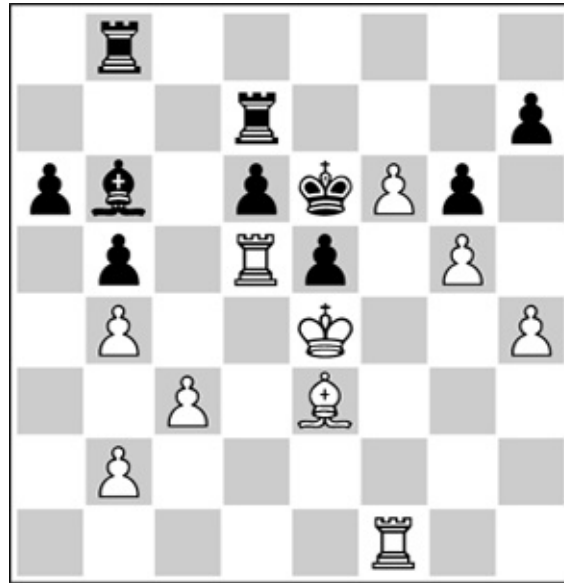


How does White force a weakening of the black pawn structure? And what are the consequences?

[Solution](#)



7.2



During the entire game, Black has suffered on account of his backward pawn on d6. The pressure is clearly tangible, but the question is: how can White make progress? The white player found a nice solution to this problem. How?

[Solution](#)

7.3



Black hopes to compensate for his weak pawn on d6 with active piece play. As soon as he can carry through **...d6-d5**, his disadvantage will be barely visible. With which strategic manoeuvre did White reduce Black's piece play to practically zero? Can you also see how White can fix the d6 pawn 'in passing'? Choose from:

- A) **1.Ne2**
- B) **1.Rc6**
- C) **1.Nc6**
- D) **1.b4.**

[Solution](#)

7.4



Black is stuck with an ‘ugly duckling’ on e6, of which he hopes to free himself by a future **...e6-e5**. With which manoeuvre does White render this push illusory?

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 8

# Training experiment

### 8.1 Introduction

That positional play cannot be learned in one day is something that we have established earlier on. Before one can claim to have played a game according to the correct strategic lines, one should first delve deeply into the problems of middlegame positions.

As a trainer I have noticed that acquiring knowledge and understanding of this matter is not an easy task. It is especially important to label the main themes in a position correctly, and to study several related examples. And even if the subject is clear, that is not to say that you will be able to apply the newly-acquired insights correctly on the next occasion. In this chapter I hope to tell you a little bit more about what we can do about this.

### 8.2 Good knight versus bad bishop

In Chapter 2 I dished up a position from the game Fischer-Gadia, Mar del Plata 1960, for you. To refresh your memory, we started with the following position:



From here White won the game because he had the huge advantage of good knight versus bad bishop. In Chapter 9 we will go deeper into creating and building upon such types of advantage.

In my work as a trainer I have spent a lot of time on this theme. For players who have to develop their strategic understanding further, the theme of strong squares can provide a lot of insight. In my opinion, this subject lends itself perfectly to the development of a ‘feeling’ for positional play.

With a quite considerable number of players, teaching an entirely different line of thinking turns out to be necessary in order to make real progress. It is my experience that many club players immediately start to calculate when they are looking at a position. They see ‘loose moves’ – variations. Such players find it difficult to develop a coherent concept. But in positional play, everything revolves around making plans and long-term thinking.

A line of thinking where a player looks schematically at a position is indispensable for the endgame at hand. In this light, it is not surprising that in my own games I often get the advantage of good knight versus bad bishop. Not only has the subject always held my interest, but if you spend much time on it, you will automatically get it on the board more often as well.

As a result, I have built up a certain reputation in this area in Holland – with youth players. And this stimulated me to accumulate a certain amount of exercise material on this subject and, in any case, to take care at least to familiarize my pupils with these problems. I was pleased every time I was sent a game where a pupil had succeeded in getting the theme on the board. And it was even better when that pupil had managed to score a point with it. That would make me sit back with satisfaction.

### **8.3 The balance between strategy and tactics**

What is a winning position for a grandmaster, does not at all have to be for an inexperienced player. I myself have learned a lot by playing through games by strong players that had been annotated by themselves. For example, in my youth I picked up a lot from the book *The Art of Analysis* by Jan Timman. It was interesting for me to see a strong grandmaster like Timman describe how he unravelled the problems in a position. I found it instructive how he sometimes managed to gain complete control of a position on the basis of a superior pawn structure.

I miss this strategic depth a little with many modern players. It is no rarity to find players flashing through games at high speed with their finger on the cursor key of their laptop. Sometimes I ask them if they can explain to me in words what happened in that game. And before they can give an answer, I ask them if they think they can understand within a few seconds the deeper backgrounds of a game on which two strong players have spent more than four hours thinking time.

These days chess has become much more dynamic. The sharpening of the struggle was initiated by Kasparov, and under the influence of players like Topalov and Shirov, attacking play has experienced a boom. But it always turns out that more strategically inclined players, such as for instance Kramnik and Leko, can hold their own at the highest level.

Actually, both types of players are able to turn their hands on both styles. For even though Shirov has the reputation of being a tactician *par excellence*, there are plenty of games where he outclasses his opponents with small positional means. And from Kramnik we know that, although he likes to steer the game into strategic waters, he can also produce magnificent attacking games. Precisely with these great players, the balance between strategy and tactics is perfect.

#### 8.4 Training experiment

The above reflections lead us to the following game, which I have used for an interesting training experiment.

SI 14.8 (B90)

□ **Polgar, Judit**

■ **Anand, Viswanathan**

Wijk aan Zee 1998 (6)

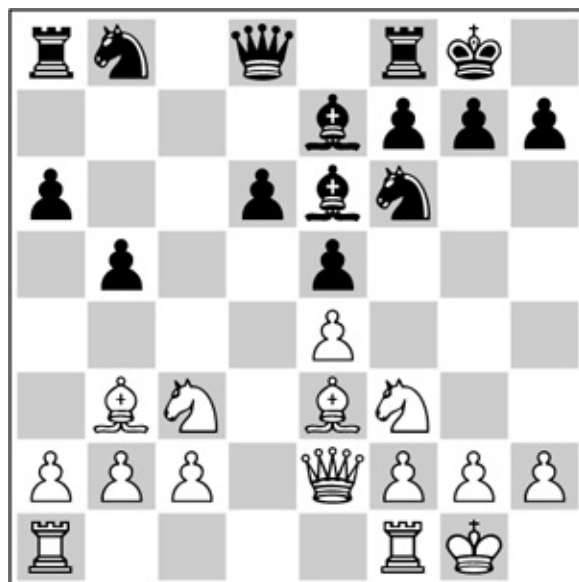
**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nf3 Be7 8.Bc4 0-0 9.0-0 Be6**

This was a fashionable variation for a while, where both players engage in a dispute for the d5-square.

**10.Qe2**

White usually plays 10.Bb3 here, which mostly leads to a position similar to the one in the game. By opting for this move order, Polgar provokes an action with ...b7-b5, which may give her an important target later in the game, as we have seen in the game Fischer-Gadia.

**10...b5 11.Bb3**



### **11...Bxb3?**

GM Baburin writes: ‘This gives White more control in the centre and must therefore be considered very risky strategically.’ I would like to put this more strongly: this swap is a big strategic mistake, especially for a player of Anand’s calibre.

A tactical blunder would be 11...Nbd7??. After 12.Bxe6 fxe6 13.Ng5, Black loses a valuable pawn. The alternative 11...h6 is known from several games.

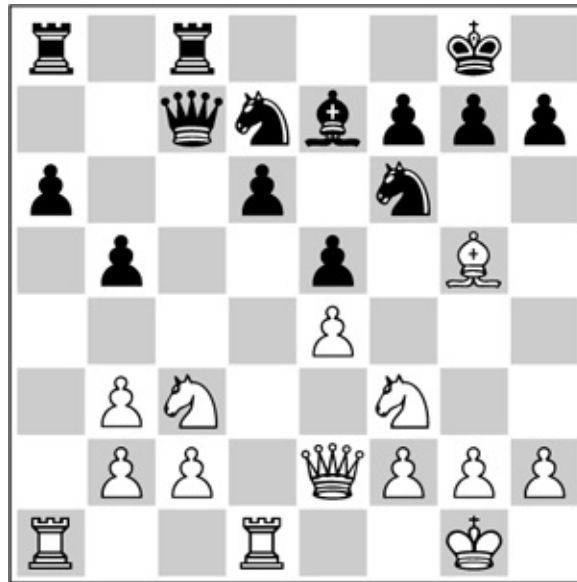
### **12.axb3**

It is clear that Black will have problems with the d5-square. Moreover, White has gained control of the half-open a-file, and – as indicated above – the vulnerability of the queenside pawns may play a role.

### **12...Nbd7 13.Rfd1 Qc7**

Probably 13...h6 should have been preferred, although this pawn move involves a weakening of the kingside. Now Judit engages in a battle for square d5.

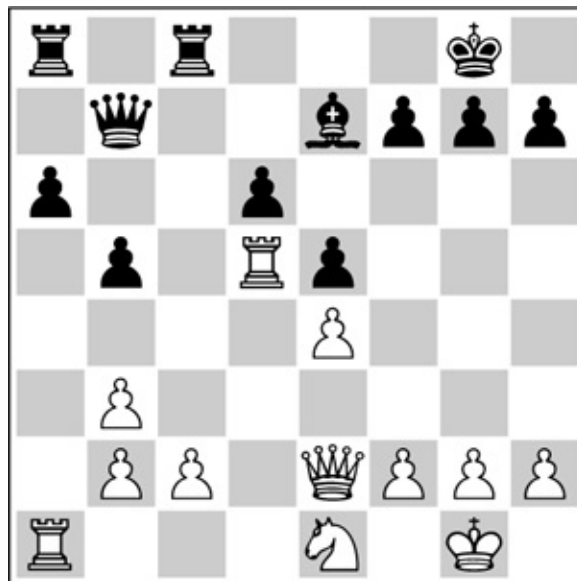
### **14.Bg5 Rfc8**



### 15.Ne1!

Protecting the pawn on c2 in a flexible way, so White can get on with her siege of the square d5. The usual counter play in the Sicilian, achieved by pressure on the c-file, is hereby reduced to a minimum.

**15...Qb7 16.Bxf6 Nxf6 17.Nd5 Nxd5 18.Rxd5**



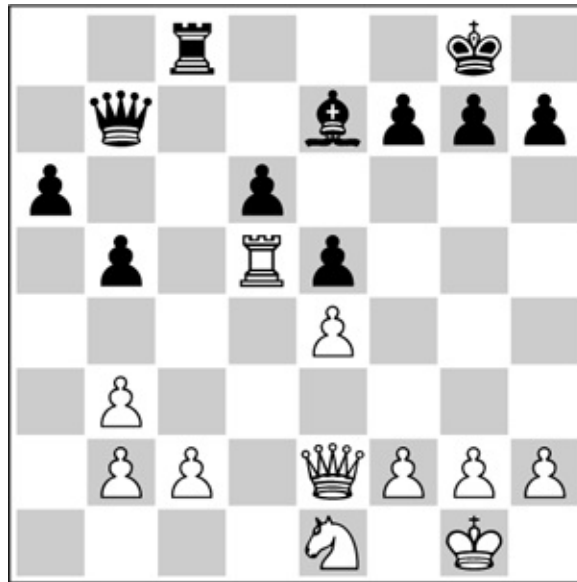
The white player has managed to occupy the square d5 with a piece.

Furthermore, she has achieved the ideal material balance: good knight versus bad bishop. The knight 'only' needs to be repositioned now, in order to increase the pressure on the black position. Of course the knight should not be exchanged for the bishop.

**18...Rc5 19.Rad1 Rxd5 20.Rxd5 Rc8**



According to Baburin, Black might have played 20...b4, fixing the pawn on c2 and creating counter play along the c-file, but he immediately adds that this move would weaken even more light squares.



### 21.c3!

A beautiful, strategically sound move with several intentions. For example, Polgar prevents Black from obtaining counterplay on the c-file, and she vacates the square c2 for the knight, which can now head for the beautiful square d5.

### 21...b4

21...Rc5 is simply met by 22.Rd1, when Black cannot liberate himself with 22...d5? in view of 23.b4!, winning the pawn on d5.

**22.c4 g6 23.g3 Rc5 24.Rd1 a5 25.Nc2 Kg7 26.Qd3 Rc6 27.Ne3 Qc8 28.Kg2 Qe6 29.Qe2 Bd8 30.Nd5**

The knight has arrived on the square d5, enabling White to get a firm grip on the position. Thus, she has achieved the main strategic aim of getting the knight on the strong square d5, versus a bad bishop. In order to make further progress White will have to set up an attack, making full use of this strong knight.

**30...Rc5 31.Qe3 Be7 32.Rd3 Bd8 33.Qd2 Rc6 34.Qd1 Kg8 35.h4 Kg7**

Sometimes adopting a wait-and-see attitude is the right approach. But here Black shouldn't have waited while White makes further progress on the kingside. Better was 35...h5.

### 36.h5

This follows Nimzowitsch's strategy to create two (or more) weaknesses.

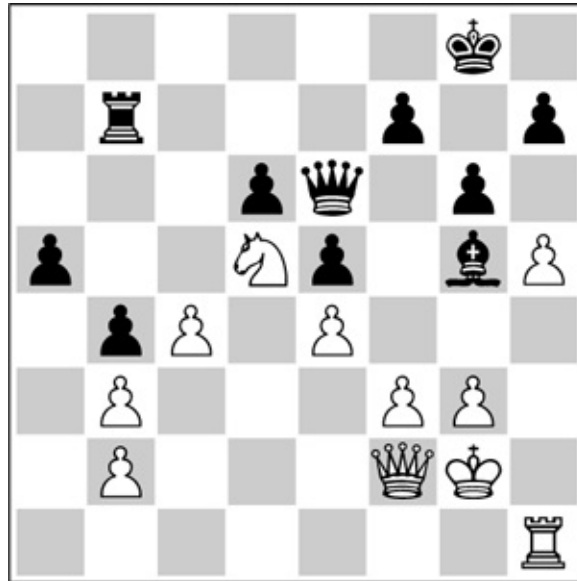
**36...Bg5 37.Qf3 Rc8 38.Rd1 Rc6 39.Qe2 Rc8 40.Rh1 Kg8 41.f3**

A subtle continuation, with which Polgar intends to realize several ideas. She has vacated the square f2 for the queen (to bring Qf2-a7 into the position) and the

queen can also be deployed on the other side of the board (Qe2-f2-g1-h2).

**41...Rb8 42.Qf2 Rb7**

Anand also achieves a sound set-up. The rook prevents the penetration of White's queen on the queenside, and at the same time it (indirectly) keeps an eye on h7.



**43.hxg6fxg6**

After the recapture with the other pawn, 43...hxg6, White can realize her other idea with 44.Qg1. After 44...f5 (or 44...Bf6 45.Qh2 Bg7 46.Qh4! Rb8 47.Ra1!, and Black will not be able to keep his position together) 45.Qh2 Bf6 46.Qh6 Bg7 47.Qg5 Rd7 48.Ra1, Black again has no answer to White's play on two wings.

**44.c5!**

Now that the black kingside has been weakened, White turns to the queenside.

**44...dxc5 45.Qxc5 Bd8 46.Rc1 Kf7 47.Qe3 Kg7 48.Rc4 Rd7 49.Qc1**

Polgar systematically increases the pressure. She keeps a permanent grip on the position and does not allow any counterplay. Black is condemned to reacting.

**49...h5 50.Rc6 Rd6 51.Rc8**

Slowly but surely, the white pieces force an entry into the black position. The black bishop is still utterly powerless.

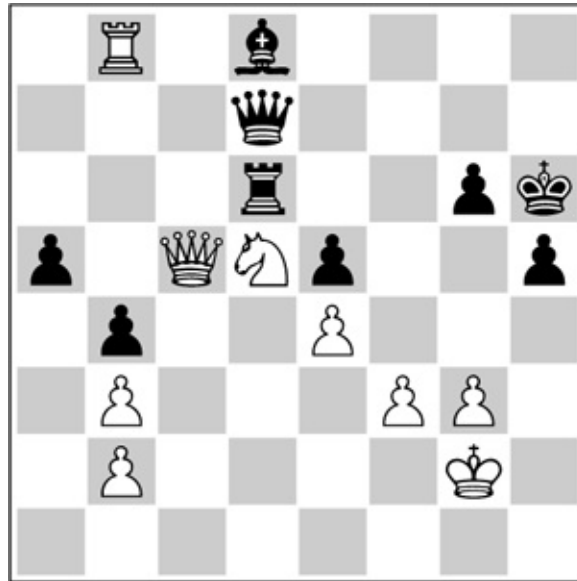
**51...Qd7 52.Qc5 Kh6**

An interesting counter was 52...Bb6. However, White plays 53.Qc4, keeping total control of the position. Only not 53.Nxb6 Rd2+ 54.Kg1 Rd1+ 55.Kg2 Rd2+, and Black escapes with perpetual check.

**53.Rb8**

Judit remains focused on preventing her opponents counter play. By the way, she could also have opted for 53.Ra8, since 53...Bb6? will end badly for Black after

54.Qc1+ (certainly not 54.Nxb6? Rd2+ and Black again achieves perpetual check) 54...Kg7 55.Qg5 Bd4 (or 55...Re6 56.Nxb6 Rxb6 57.Qxe5+ Rf6 58.Ra6, and White wins. After 55...Qe6 56.Nxb6 Rxb6 57.Ra7+, all resistance is also broken) and now 56.Ne7! is very strong, with the original follow-up 56...Kf7 57.Ng8!, and Black runs out of moves.



### 53...Bf6

Curiously, after the extremely ‘ugly’ move 53...g5, the position does not offer an immediate decision. Granted, Black puts another pawn on the wrong colour, but at the same time he rules out the annoying Qc1 check. Presumably White should now try to exchange all the major pieces, since the knight versus bishop ending almost certainly wins: 54.Ra8 Bb6 55.Qc4 Bd8.

On 53...Kg7, 54.Rb7! Qxb7 55.Qxd6 is a favourable liquidation for White. The combination of queen plus (strong) knight will beat the queen-(bad) bishop tandem.

### 54.Qe3+ Bg5?

A mistake in a lost position. But also after the superior 54...Kg7 White would be virtually winning with 55.Ra8!.

### 55.f4!

This push, which Judit has postponed as long as possible, as she didn’t want to make her own king vulnerable, now comes with great power.

### 55...exf4 56.Rh8+

**1-0**

Anand surrendered, as he had also seen that after 56...Kg7 57.Qd4+ Bf6 White strikes home with the beautiful sacrifice 58.Qxf6+! Rxf6 59.Rh7+ Kxh7, and the knight has the final word: 60.Nxf6+ Kg7 61.Nxd7.

What is so instructive about this game? A by nature tactically very proficient player like Judit Polgar manages to force no less an opponent than Viswanathan Anand into a strategically hopeless position. Then an endless manoeuvring phase follows, where Judit strengthens her position step by step. The first task she sets herself is to play her knight via e1 to d5, after which she definitively holds the position in her grasp. When she has managed to put her knight on the dream square by subtle manoeuvres, a new phase breaks.

In this phase she succeeds in creating weaknesses for the opponent on two wings. Black is forced to pull out all the stops in order not to be overrun, and then Polgar opens the position along the c-file, where she then reigns supreme. All her actions are in the style of the great masters, of whom Petrosian is perhaps the shining example. Without allowing a shred of counter play, she increases her advantages. When Anand, brought down to his knees, makes a tactical mistake at the end, Polgar turns the switch and tackles him with an unparalleled tactical turn. It is no mean feat to render a great player like Anand powerless like this, but Polgar has managed to produce a virtually perfect game.

I wondered if this wouldn't be highly instructive for four youth players that I trained in a group, as part of a project sponsored by the Stichting Bevordering Schaaksport Nederland (Dutch Foundation for the Promotion of Chess). I was to train and coach four talented 12-year-old boys for about three years. Since the hours of contact were relatively scarce, and the travelling distances were relatively large, I decided to strive for a high training intensity by playing out the position below against them via email.



The youngster had White and I was going to defend this position with black. Of

course, they were meant to try and convert their indisputable advantage in this position into other concrete advantages. For this purpose, I had looked at various examples with them, and given them exercise material on the subject at home. I could expect them to be well-prepared!

The arrangement was that at least three to five times a week a move would be played, and that they would put this position on the board at home, in order to imitate a normal game situation as closely as possible. Additionally, it was arranged that they obviously wouldn't use a computer (i.e., no engine, and no consulting of databases either). Of course I had to rely on their honesty, but I was sure I could count on that, since all four of them were very ambitious boys, and of course they knew that they would only be fooling themselves.

Since I would have to defend a bad position in four games at a time, I had arranged that I would sporadically turn on a chess computer if waging the defence would become too much for me to handle. For this purpose I now and then used the program 'The King', an engine that was built into the database program Tascbase; unfortunately this is a DOS-program that cannot be used nowadays under the newest Windows versions. By the way, the program wasn't of much help to me, since we had a mostly strategic position, in which the program frequently gave wrong assessments. To be honest, I have to say that in one game, where the position suddenly exploded and things got very tactical, the computer put me on the right track and I found the right way to play.

Of these four talents, three have developed very strongly many years later. Two of them, Wouter Spoelman and Vincent Rothuis, have become international masters. The former has also pocketed a grandmaster norm already.

The third, Twan Burg, is short-listed to become an IM; the fourth, Egbert Oevers, gave priority to his education, but he is still a respectable club player. The latter, by the way, withdrew from the project after one year, and he was replaced by the 13-year-old Ali Bitalzadeh, who also managed to bag the international master title afterwards.

That this group became so successful was in the first place the merit of the players themselves. All four of them were motivated to focus entirely on their chess study, and they invested a lot of hours in it. Besides, they had not been selected for nothing – their talent had stood out before. It was the task of the trainer to set them to some sound work, and playing out this game was one of the routines that I opted for.

Below I give the four games that were played, with the comments and analyses that we made afterwards.

□ Spoelman, Wouter

■ Grooten, Herman

Netherlands 2002



**1.b4!?**

Wouter meets one criterion in this position, namely preventing Black's counterplay along the c-file. The downside of this move is that the square b4 is no longer available for the knight.

**1...g6 2.Qd3?!**

The queen is in the way here, since the rook will later have to vacate the square d5 for the knight.

**2...Rc6 3.c3 Qc8 4.g3 Qe6 5.Nc2 Bd8**

Black can allow the knight on e3 for the moment, since it cannot jump to d5 right away.

**6.Kg2 Kg7 7.Na3**

A strange move at first sight, but White already realizes the intended plan. He is now planning to support the push c3-c4 and hopes to get the knight on d5 after all, via b1-c3.

**7...h5 8.b3?!**

White doesn't anticipate his opponent's actions. He should not allow his kingside to be weakened. Necessary was 8.h4.

**8...h4 9.c4 Bb6 10.h3**

Not a pretty move, since the white king will now feel the 'draught'.

**10...hxg3 11.fxg3**

Now the second rank has been opened, and this does not help White. Also, the

centre is undermined and White is losing his grip on it.

**11...f5 12.NM**

If Black does nothing, it appears as if White will be able to realize his ideal (the knight to d5) after all.

**12...fxe4!**

But Black continues with his strategy of swapping as many pawns and active pieces as possible.

**13.Qxe4 Qf5 14.Qxf5 gxf5**

Slowly the pawn structure is beginning to favour Black.

**15.Nd2**

The knight will not get there, and this means that the position is balanced.

**15...Kf6 16.Kf3 Bd4 17.g4!**

A good move, with which White tries to 'retake' the light squares.

**17...Bc3!**

Black will now gladly get rid of his bad bishop, otherwise the knight will get to e4.

**18.gxf5 Bxd2**

After 18...Bxb4 19.Ne4+ Kxf5 20.cxb5 axb5 21.Rxb5, a draw would also be the most probable outcome.

**19.Rxd2 Kxf5 20.Ke3 bxc4**

Draw agreed. Neither side can play for a win.

□ **Rothuis, Vincent**

■ **Grooten, Herman**

Netherlands 2002



**1.Rd1 g6 2.c3!**

Vincent succeeds in finding the right plan.

**2...b4**

Thus Black prevents White from playing b3-b4 himself. The knight can now only reach the square d5 via e3, and Black tries to keep this square under cover with his bishop.

**3.c4 Rc6 4.Nc2 Bg5 5.Qg4 Bf4?!**

In fact this was based on a miscalculation.

**6.g3 Bh6**

I had planned 6...h5 now, but here I realized that this would be strongly met by 7.Qh4 Bh6 8.g4!. Black would then have been in big trouble.

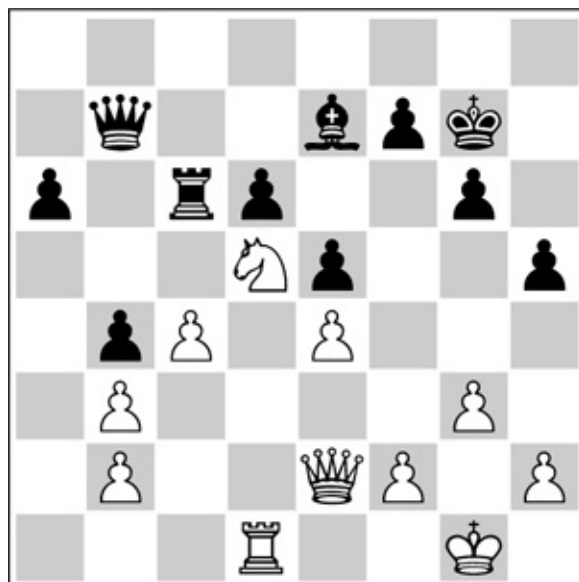
**7.Qh4 Bf8**

It's a sad story that the bishop has to go to this bad square; and the knight can still get to d5.

**8.Ne3 Be7 9.Qg4 h5 10.Qe2 Kg7 11.Nd5**

White has fully realized the plan of taking the knight to d5





### **11...Bd8**

Trying to sabotage the white pawn structure with 11...h4 would backfire here. White would soon take control of the h-file, with disastrous consequences for Black: 12.Qg4hxf3 13.hxf3.

### **12.h4!**

Vincent has played very strongly so far. He does not allow Black to play ...h5-h4.

### **12...h5**

Another pawn on the wrong colour, but here this isn't so bad. In the right circumstances, Black will threaten ...a5-a4.

### **13.Kg2 Qc8 14.Ra1**

White plays very prophylactically. With the text move he wants to rule out the possibility of ...a5-a4. In the long run he will have to work with the f2-f4 push. A positionally attractive move (like in the stem game Polgar-Anand) would fail here for tactical reasons: 14.Qe3? Bxh4, and now 15.gxh4?? is not possible in view of 15...Qg4+.

### **14...Qe6 15.f3**

Now 15.Qe3 would have been a good option.

### **15...f5 16.exf5!?**

I would not have played this myself, but it works out well. White voluntarily gives up his control of the light squares, and he also mobilizes the black pawn centre, making the bishop better than it is now. The upside is that Black's king position becomes exposed, as a result of which Vincent gets chances against the enemy monarch.

### **16...gxf5 17.f4**

This was the intention, but his rook is a little offside.

**17...Kh6**

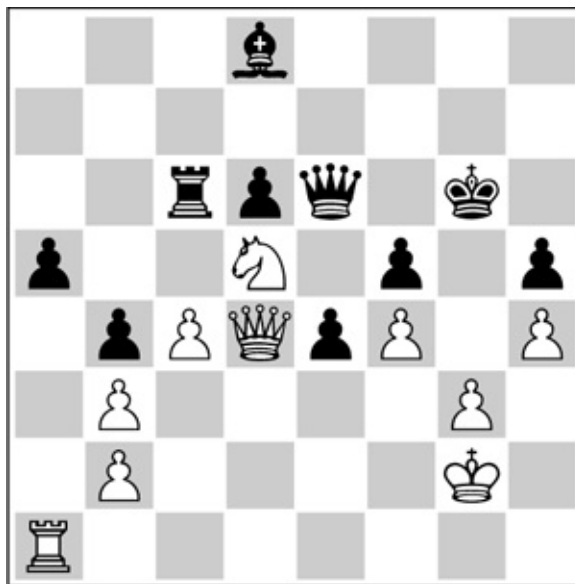
Not to g6, in view of tricks with Nf4+.

**18.Qd2?!**

White should now have consistently continued opening up the position. After 18.fxe5! dxe5 19.Re1 e4 20.Rd1!, Black would have had great problems avoiding material loss.

**18...e4 19.Qd4 Kg6**

Black cannot prevent the white queen from paying a visit.



**20.Qh8?!**

The right idea in the wrong move order! With 20.g4!, White could have seized his chance: 20...hxg4 (20...fxg4? is not on in view of 21.Rf1 Qf5 22.Ne3, and the attack runs smoothly) 21.Qh8 Rc8 22.h5+ Kf7 23.h6, and the white passed pawn decides the battle.

**20...Rc8 21.g4?**

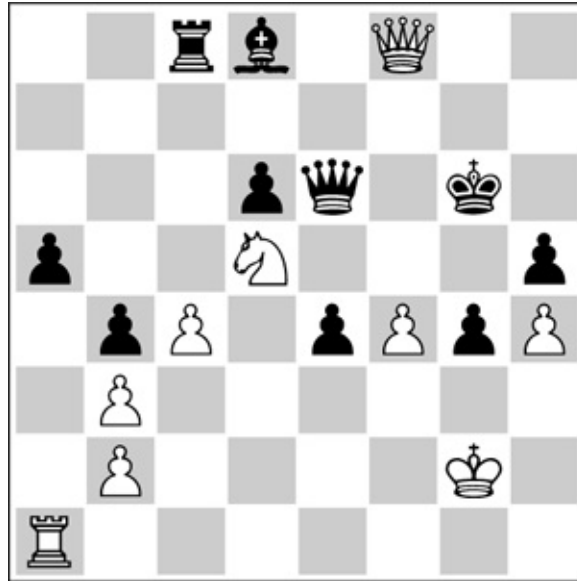
An incredible pawn sacrifice that barely fails to work in White's favour. White had another trick at his disposal, namely: 21.Rxa5 Bxa5 22.Qxc8 Qxc8 23.Ne7+ Kf6 24.Nxc8 Ke6 25.Na7, but Black certainly doesn't have to lose after 25... Kd7.

**21...fxg4 22.Qf8?!**

White now really starts to gamble, allowing Black to save his skin thanks to a cunning defence. 22.f5+ Qxf5 23.Qg8+ Kh6 24.Qh8+ would have forced a draw, but Vincent tries for more.

The difference is that after 22.Rf1, Black has 22...Bxh4! available. After 23.f5+ Qxf5 24.Nf4+ Kf7 25.Qh6 Bg5 26.Qxh5+ Kg7, Black escapes his dark fate by

the skin of his teeth.



**22...Bxh4! 23.f5+ Kh7!!**

This is just possible, and now Black will be better. 23...Qxf5?? would lose material after 24.Nf4+ Kg5 25.Qg7+ Kxf4 26.Rf1+.

**24.fxe6 Rxf8 25.e7**

Here 25.Rxa5 offered good chances of salvation: 25...Rf2+ 26.Kg1 Rxb2 27.Nf4!, and it looks as if Black cannot win.

By the way, not 27.e7?, as after 27...Rb1 28.Kg2 Bxe7 29.Ra7 Rxb3 30.Rxe7+ Kg6 31.Rxe4 Rb2+ 32.Kg1 (32.Kg3?? Kg5!) 32...b3 Black retains every chance of winning.

**25...Re8 26.Rxa5 Kg7 27.Nf4 Bxe7 28.Nxh5+Kf7 29.Kg3**

In the following, the black e-pawn will become strong, as the rook is already ideally placed and the bishop has the colour of the promotion square e1!

**29...e3 30.Kxg4?**

But only this is the decisive mistake. The only move was 30.Rf5+ Ke6 31.Ng7+ Kd7 32.Rf1 (32.Nxe8?! Bh4+! 33.Kxh4 e2 34.Nf6+ Kc6, and the pawn queens) 32...Rg8 33.Nf5, and the point will probably be shared.

**30...e2**

Vincent resigned here. He had missed that in the variation after 31.Ra1, Black would play 31...Bh4!. The ending after 32.Kxh4 e1Q+ 33.Rxe1 Rxe1 is indeed prospectless for White.

□ **Burg,Twan**

■ **Grooten,Herman**

Netherlands 2002



### **1.g4?!**

Another pawn moves to the right colour, but White shouldn't overdo it. The weakening of the dark squares will later turn out to work against White.

The idea to play the knight via g2 to e3 is nice, but for that purpose he must be able to kick the bishop from g5. If White wants to pursue this plan, 1.g3 is more normal.

### **1...b4**

Perhaps I should have preferred ...Rc6 first, making ...Bd8 and ...Bb6 possible.

### **2.Ng2 Rc5 3.Ne3**

Perhaps it would have been better to play 3.Rd2 first.

### **3...Bg5 4.Rxc5**

Thus White gets a knight on beautiful light squares, but it's a pity that he rids Black of his weak backward pawn.

### **4...dxc5 5.Nc4**

More logical might have been 5.Nd5, getting his knight on d5 after all. White would preserve the c4-square for his queen in that case.

### **5...Qe7 6.Qd1 Qe6 7.f3**

The white kingside is slightly weakened, although this is of little consequence.

### **7...h5 8.h3 Qf6 9.Kg2 Qf4**

White gets no time to make optimal use of his queen.

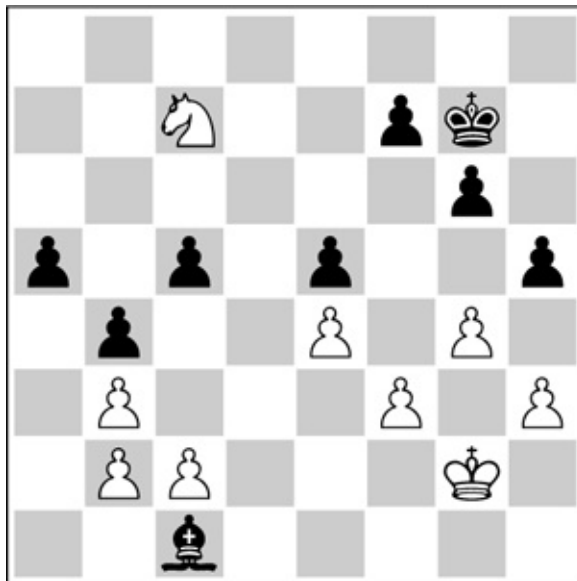
### **10.Qe1**

Also after 10.Qd6 Qc1, Black would have sufficient counterplay.

**10...g6 11.Nb6 Kg7 12.Nd5 Qc1**

Now Black does want to trade queens.

**13.Qxc1 Bxc1 14.Nc7a5**



**15.Na6?!**

This move causes problems for White. Black will get a dangerous a-pawn. As we know, the rook pawn is the arch-enemy of the knight.

With 15.Ne8+! Kf8 16.Nd6 Bxb2 17.Nc4 Bd4 18.Nxa5, White could have obtained a pure good knight versus bad bishop ending. Winning this will be difficult, as his king probably won't be able to enter Black's position. But White is the only one who can play for a win here, and Black has to sit and wait. After the text move, things are completely different!

**15...Be3 16.Nb8 c4! 17.bxc4?**

This move will cause White lots of worries. The only move to keep the balance was 17.Nc6! cxb3 18.cxb3 Bd4 19.Nxa5 Bxb2, and also here White could never lose – he can even play for a win.

**17...a4 18.Na6 a3 19.bxa3 bxa3 20.Nb4 Bc5 21.Na2**

The knight is now inactive, and Black brings his king into play.

**21...Kf6 22.Nc1 Kg5 23.Nb3**

Also after 23.Kg3 h4+ 24.Kg2 Bd4, White cannot prevent the black king from making an entrance.

**23...a2 24.Na1**

24.c3 is no solution, as after 24...h4 25.Na1 Kf4 26.Nc2 Bb6 27.Na1 Ke3, the king invades devastatingly.

**24...Bd4 25.Nb3**

The desperate attempt 25.c5 would be quickly refuted by 25...Bxa1 26.c6 Bd4 27.c7a1Q 28.c8Q Qg1#.

**25...a1Q 26.Nxa1 Bxa1 27.c5 Bd4 28.c6 Bb6 0-1**

☐ **Clevers,Egbert**

■ **Grooten,Herman**

Netherlands 2002



### **1.Qd3**

This move does nothing for the plan to play the knight to d5.

**1...b4 2.Ra5 Rc6 3.g3 g6 4.h4**

Otherwise, White has built up quite neatly.

**4...Bd8 5.Rd5 Bb6 6.c4 bxc3**

Black gladly exchanges off as many pawns as possible, making his bishop better and better.

**7.bxc3 Ba7!**

Black takes up a wait-and-see attitude, in the meantime trying to create counterplay for his major pieces. A not entirely sound alternative was 7...f5 8.exf5 Rxc3 9.Qxc3 Qxd5 in view of 10.Qc8+, after which White is somewhat better.

**8.c4?!**

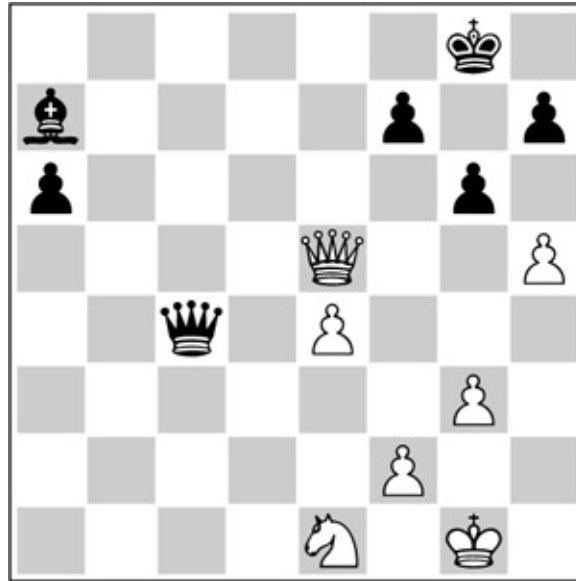
With the modest 8.Qc2, White could have maintained the balance. Now he will get into trouble.

**8...Rb6 9.Rxd6 Rxd6 10.Qxd6 Qxb3**

There was something to be said for 10...Qxe4.

**11.Qxe5 Qxc4 12.h5**

Now White should have opted for the drawing line 12.Qe8+Kg7 13.Qe5+.



**12...Qd4 13.Qxd4?!**

It is very risky to enter an ending where the opponent has an outside passed pawn against a knight. It would have been better to keep the queens on the board with 13.Qe8+ Kg7 14.h6+ Kxh6 15.Qxf7, and also here, chances are equal.

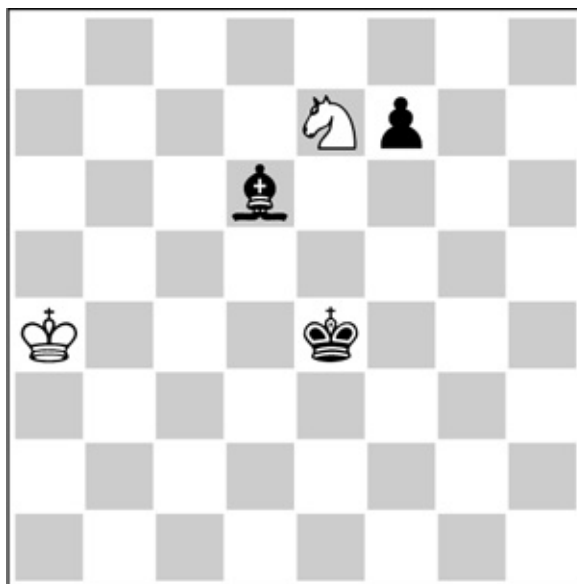
**13...Bxd4 14.Nc2 Bc5 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.KH Kf8 17.Ke2 Ke7 18.f3 Ke6 19.f4 a5 20.g4?!**

20.Kd3 was preferable.

**20...g5**

Despite the reduced material, Black's winning chances are considerable.

**21.fxg5 Ke5 22.Kd3 a4 23.Kc4 Be7 24.Nd4 Bxg5 25.Nf5 Bd2 26.g5 Bxg5 27.Kb4 Bf4 28.Kxa4 Kxe4 29.Ne7 Bd6**



White has defended like a lion, but still he cannot reach the safe haven of a draw.

### **30.Nc6**

After 30.Ng8 f5 31.Nf6+, Black continues with 31...Ke5! 32.Nh5 Kd5!!. The knight on h5 is now dominated by the bishop in all lines, and the black king will collect it next. 33.Kb3 (33.Nf6+ Ke6 34.Nh7 (34.Nh5 Be5 – domination!) 34... Be7 – domination!) 33...Be5! (domination!) 34.Kc2 Ke4 35.Kd2 Kf3 36.Ke1 Kg4.

### **30...f5 31.Na5**

Also after 31.Nd8 Be7 32.Ne6 Ke5 33.Ng7 f4 34.Nh5 f3 35.Ng3 f2 36.Kb3 Kf4 37.Nf1 Bg5! 38.Kc2 Kf3 39.Kd3 Kg2 40.Ke2 Bf4, following the umpteenth domination, the curtain falls definitively.

### **31...Kd3!**

**0-1**

What conclusions should we draw from this? The results are rather disappointing for the young talents. But after the games I immediately put this into perspective for them. One by one they had played well in certain entire phases of the game. This is another important thing when coaching players: you should turn their mistakes and omissions into something positive. Thus, I would never utter the word ‘wrong’ as a matter of principle. I would rather speak of a ‘learning opportunity’.

In the collective analysis afterwards, it became clear that Vincent should even have won, and that the others certainly wouldn’t have lost if they hadn’t tried so hard for a win.

By the way, this fighting spirit does them credit; I had told them that they would develop their play if in their games they would fight on in positions that looked



‘equal’. Today it is not easy to learn good endgame technique, as many games must be rattled off at an accelerated tempo, under great time pressure. Nevertheless, precisely the analysis of endgames is highly instructive, and I remember that my teacher Cor van Wijgerden always said that you will play the middlegame better if you have a better understanding of the endgame.

There is one important lesson that had to be drawn from these four training games: three of the four boys didn’t manage to get a knight on d5, so that nothing relevant had been changed in the structure. Twan could have played his knight there, but then he had already swapped rooks on c5, and solved the weakness of the pawn on d6.

I have explicitly tried to demonstrate the patience and subtlety of Polgar’s play, which is necessary in such a position. A second point of improvement was that, when Polgar had finally settled the knight on the strong square, careful manoeuvring was still required. The strategy of playing on both wings, creating two weaknesses, was deemed highly instructive by all four pupils.

But also in the analysis it turned out that the inclination with these 12-year-olds to ‘start action’ had to be suppressed in this type of position. Otherwise, I only wanted to stimulate the youthful zest that they all had! In any case, it was useful to see how Polgar only made a ‘raw pawn move’ like f3-f4 when it won almost immediately.

Imagine my surprise when a few years later I paid a visit to the Amsterdam Chess Tournament. When I entered the playing hall I looked at the demonstration boards, with the positions of the games that were being played. Before I got the opportunity to look closer at any of the games, I noticed a broad grin on the face of the still very young Wouter Spoelman. With a 2277 rating he was up against the slightly older, also very talented Dutch master Erwin I’Ami, who then had a FIDE rating of 2486 to his name. A few years later I’Ami even became a strong grandmaster, who managed to achieve a 2600+ rating. After I had cast a glance at the demonstration board, I immediately understood why Wouter looked round the room with such a big smile on his face.

□ **Spoelman, Wouter**

■ **I’Ami, Erwin**

Amsterdam 2004 (6)



In this position the proud knight is sure as fate on d4. Black has a bishop, of which he cannot really make any good use. With his following move

**1.Rh2!**

White activates one of his two rooks. This way he hopes to increase the pressure along the b-file, and possibly also on the c4 pawn.

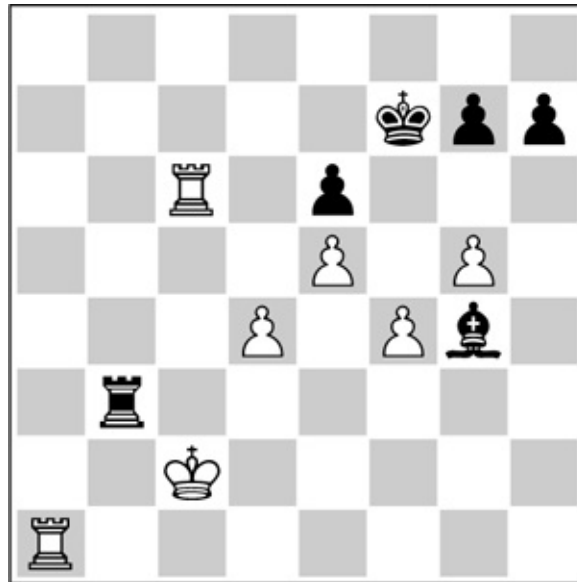
**1...R8d7 2.Rb2 Bf5**

Black's powerlessness can already be sensed.

**3.a5 Rxd4**

A desperate attempt, and White makes short work of it. If Black had sat and waited with, for instance, 3...Rc5, he would also have lost slowly but surely after 4.Kf3 Bd3 5.g4 Ke7 6.Ra4.

**4.cxd4 c3 5.Rb5 b6 6.axb6 axb6 7.Rxb6 c2 8.Rc6 Rb7 9.g4 Rb3+ 10.Kd2 Bxg4 11.Kxc2**



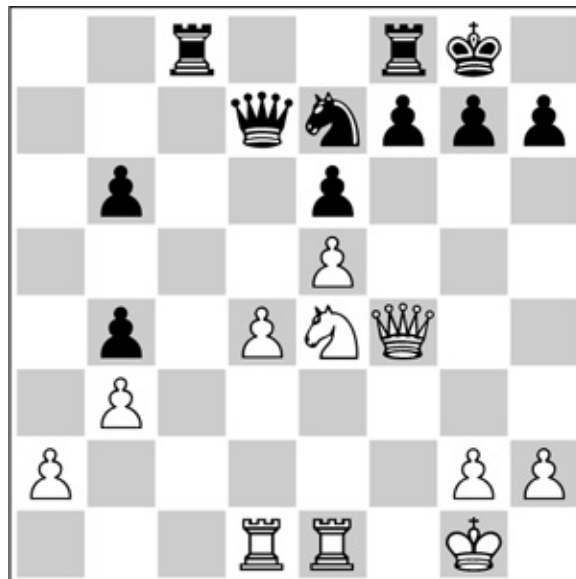
And White had robbed the position of all prospects for Black. On move 60 Spoelman had gained his master scalp. When I congratulated him on his win after the game, he replied: 'You taught me!' A trainer cannot get a greater compliment, I guess...

## Chapter 9

# Strong and weak squares

### 9.1 Introduction

When we talk about strong or weak squares, the reader will doubtlessly have some kind of impression of what this notion implies. Nevertheless, I think it is advisable to confirm a few things and formulate a few definitions, in order to avoid confusion when we study certain positions. Before doing this, we will have a look at several positions that illustrate a number of important aspects.



With the help of this example we can formulate some **definitions**:

- We call the square d6 a weak square for Black because this square is not covered by his own pawns; moreover, the square is within his own ranks, and it is controlled by a white pawn. Also, White has a realistic possibility to move one of his pieces to this square – in this case his knight.
- We call square d5 a strong square for Black, since it cannot be controlled by white pawns; it is within his own ranks and it can be occupied by one of his own pieces.

Of course, the term ‘strong or weak square’ is relative and depends on your point of view. Thus, a weak square for Black (in this case, the d6-square) can be

labelled a strong square from White's point of view. On the other hand, the weak square c3 is strong for his opponent.

Very important is the term 'within one's own ranks'. Thus, the c3-square in the above diagram should be labelled weak for White, since this square is within his own ranks and cannot be controlled by his own pawns. Black has the possibility of focusing on the weakness of this square with 1...Nd5, followed by 2...Nc3.

If we examine the above once more, it may sound strange that the possession of a strong square, or the presence of a weak square in the opponent's position, can carry the seeds of victory, or, vice-versa, defeat. Still, there are plenty of positions where this factor is decisive, which is why we will discuss it at length here. After all, a pawn cannot move backwards, and giving up a certain square can have serious consequences for your position.

In this chapter we will distinguish between positions where a single strong (or weak) square decides the game, and positions with a greater number of weak squares, which is also called a 'colour complex'.

Now that we have made these definitions, we know what we are talking about. Let's take a closer look at a few examples.

## 9.2 One strong square

In the position below, we can see what effect one strong square can have.



White has occupied the central square e4 with his knight. If we examine the position closer we notice the following things:

- White has a protected passed pawn on d5;
- White has more space;
- White has a half-open b-file;

- White has a good bishop and a strong knight;
- Black has a half-open f-file;
- Black has an isolated pawn on e5;
- Black has a bad bishop;
- The black queen is tied to the protection of the bishop;
- The black knight is out of play.

If we connect the above features with the strong square e4, we see that almost all of them are intertwined. Black's bishop is bad because his pawns are on the same colour. Partly because the pawn on e5 is blocked, the bishop will have to remain passive. It does perform a defensive role, blockading the protected white pawn on d5.

Quite special is the white knight, which plays a dominant role on the strong e4-square. It is as though it looks 'beyond' the black pieces, and it has an undermining effect. For instance, the black queen is tied to the protection of the bishop, which seriously limits its freedom of movement.

What more does the knight on e4 do? Besides attacking the important c5- and d6-points, it also defends its own f2-point. This means that the black rooks on the f-file are actually looking foolish, since there is nothing to be gained there. Another factor, more under the surface, is that the c5 pawn misses its natural protection at the moment. The knight is a little clumsy on b6 and should ideally be played to the blockade square d6. From that square it could eliminate the strong white knight on e4. In practice, this is not so easy to achieve, since the pawn on c5 is a target on which White will focus as soon as possible.

There followed:

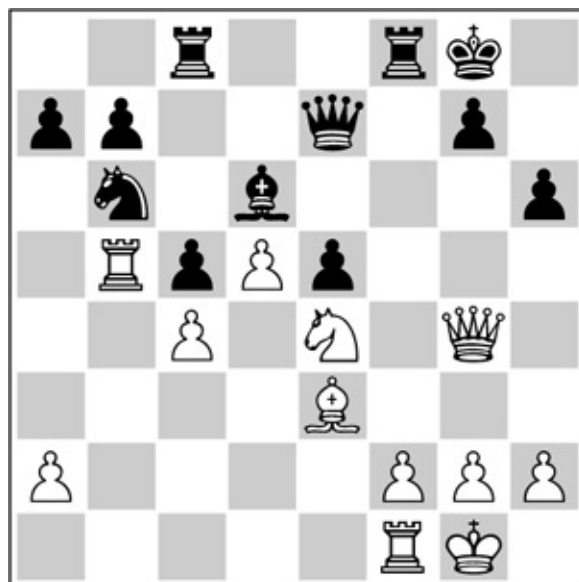
### **1.Be3 h6**

Since in these circumstances White threatens to jump inside Black's position via the g5-square, Black permits himself this weakening of his king position, which he will sorely regret later on.

After the text, White focuses on the ailing pawn on c5. But it was hard to suggest a useful alternative for Black. Possible was 1...Nc8, in order to give the pawn on c5 its natural protection with 2...b6. But White continues powerfully with 2.Qg4 b6, and now with 3.Ng5 White reaches the e6-square with his knight.

Now the problems are also mounting for Black, since, apart from the invasion by the white pieces, the pawn on b6 constitutes a new point of attack that White can get at with a2-a4-a5.

### **Rb5 Rc8 3.Qg4 Rff8**



## 4.Bxh6

Suddenly White strikes on the kingside, forcing a quick decision. Also not bad was 4.Rc1, to maintain his beautiful structure and keep his opponent tied up.

**4...Nxc4 5.Rc1 a6**

Forced, since after 5...Nb6 6.Nxd6, Black cannot take back.

## 6.Rb3b5

Positionally speaking, Black has done a good job on the queenside, but on the other side of the board he now meets an inglorious end.

### 7.Rg3

7.Bxg7 was not bad either.

**7...Rc7 8.Bxg7**

**1-0**

Playing through this fragment we are struck by the lingering power of the motionless knight on e4. It assists White in tying down the opponent on the entire board, and the attack on the king is a logical consequence.

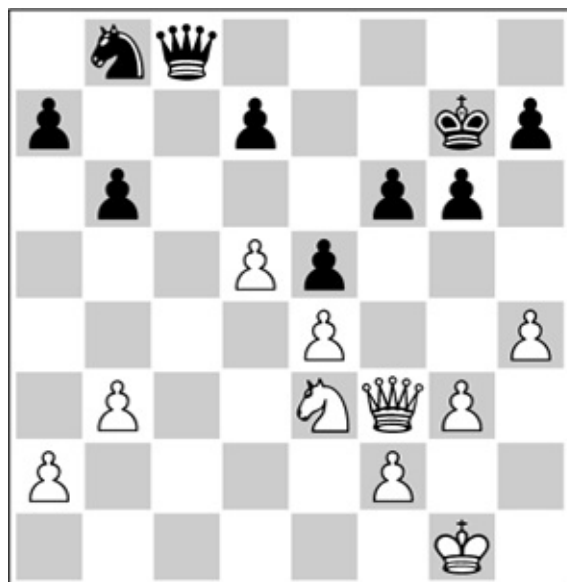
In the previous example, we have seen how the possession of a strong square led to victory. Clearly, our pieces need good squares to come alive.

In the next diagram White creates a strong square, plants a knight there, and thus ties up his opponent.

□ **Lilienthal, Andor**

■ **Keres,Paul**

Leningrad/Moscow ch-URS 1941 (4)



In this simplified position Black is in big trouble. Despite the reduced material, he has little space, and especially his knight on b8 cannot become active for the time being. Moreover, his kingside is decaying. His possession of the only open file (the c-file) does not offset the drawbacks of his position, and with his next move White hits Black where it hurts: on f6.

**1.Ng4 Qf8 2.h5**

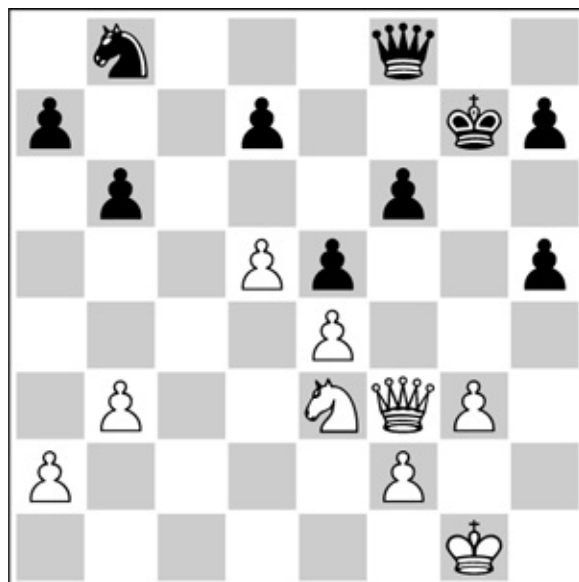
A strong move, which threatens to win a pawn right away with 3.h6+, after which Black cannot defend f6 anymore. Therefore, Black is compelled to play the following, horrible reply.

**2...gxh5**

Now an irreparable hole on f5 has been created, and Black will be made to feel this.

**3.Ne3**





### 3...d6?!

In an attempt to brighten the future of his knight somewhat, Keres weakens his position still further. Things will not get any better for him, as after some time the beautiful c6-square will fall into White's hands. What's more, the pawn on d6 will become a target.

Relatively best was the ugly-looking 3...Kh6, even though White obtains a huge advantage here as well after 4.Nf5+ Kg6 5.Nh4+.

### 4.Nf5+ Kg6 5.Qc3!

Now the queen switches to the only open file, while the knight on f5 keeps the entire position within its grasp.

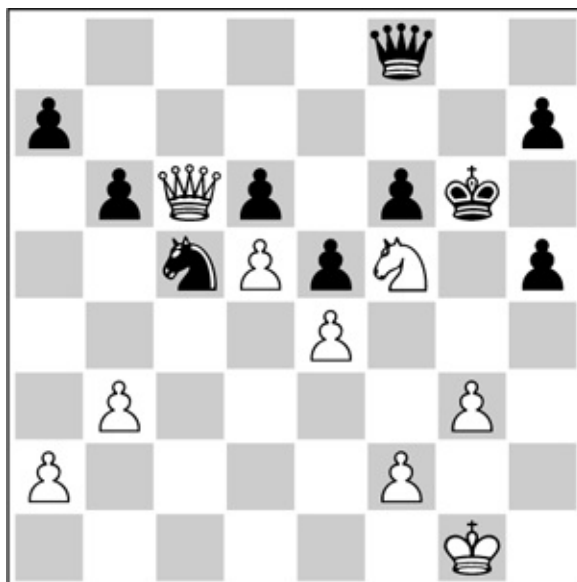
### 5...Na6

Since he realizes that the planned 5...Nd7 fails to 6.Qc7 Nc5 7.Nh4+ Kh6 8.f3, winning at least a pawn, Black decides to 'develop' his knight to the pathetic square a6.

### 6.Qc6

White opts for the gain of a pawn, but possibly 6.b4! followed by 7.a3 was even stronger. The black knight would then have had to stay on the rim forever.

### 6...Nc5



**7.f3!**

White prefers to keep the opponent in his grip, rather than give him vague counterchances with 7.Nxd6 h4 8.gxh4, followed by 8...Kh5 and, possibly, ... Qg7 or ...Qh6.

It is instructive to see how the knight on f5 reigns supreme.

**7...Nd3**

On its own this knight can accomplish nothing.

**8.Qc7**

White spurns the pawn on d6, since after 8.Qxd6? Qxd6 9.Nxd6 Ne1, Black would have good chances of a draw.

**8...b5 9.Qxa7**

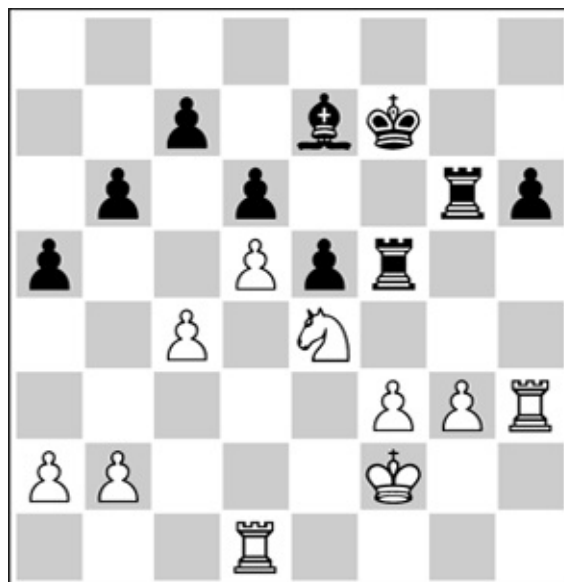
**1-0**

The helplessness of the defender that we saw in the previous fragment is even better demonstrated in the following game:

□ **Ehlvest, Jaan**

■ **Hulse, Brian**

New York Open 1993 (1)



In the diagram position, the strong knight on the e4-square immediately catches the eye. The bishop on e7 we call bad, because the most important pawns in the centre have been fixed on squares of the same colour as this bishop. The main consequence of this is that Black has become very vulnerable on the light squares.

To win from this position, White will, in the long run, have to penetrate via the light squares. This can only be achieved if he manages to exchange all the rooks. First he needs to open a second front.

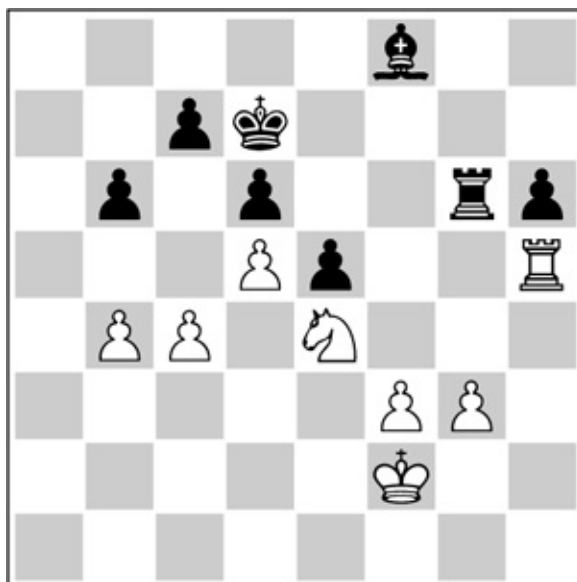
**1.a3 Ke8 2.b4 axb4 3.axb4 Kd7 4.Ra1 Bf8 5.Rah1**

The white rooks can operate on two files. Via the h-file White conquers the h5-square, which enables him later to play g3-g4 undisturbed, and then move his knight to the newly-created strong square f5.

**5...Bg7 6.Rh5 Rxh5**

Perhaps Black should not have exchanged any rooks, as long as it was not strictly necessary. Still, after 6...Rf8 7.Ra1, White would keep the position under control.

**7.Rxh5 Bf8**



### 8.Rf5

White finds an interesting method to wrong-foot his opponent. Black was ready for ...Ke7, ...Rg8, ...Bg7 and ...Ra8, which would greatly endanger Whites winning attempts.

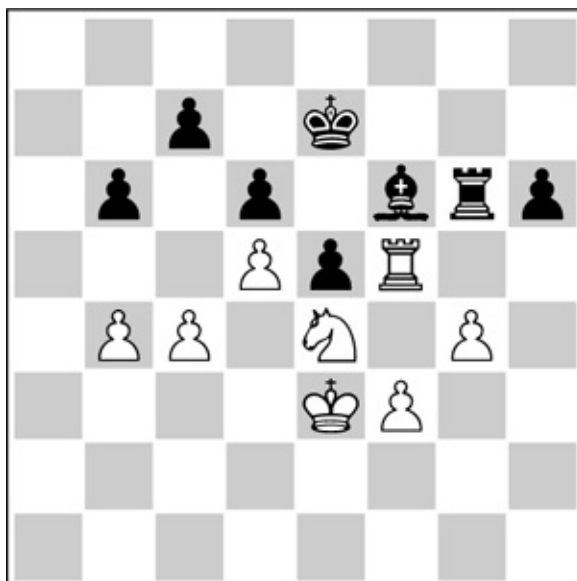
### 8...Ke7

A 'clumsy', but more or less forced move. 8...Rg8?? would fail to 9.Nf6+, and 8...Bg7 9.Rf7+ Kc8 is met by 10.g4!, after which Black cannot stir a finger.

### 9.g4 Bg7 10.Ke3

White is planning to play his knight round to f5, but he does not allow any counterchances. That is why the king has to guard the strong square e4, so Black will not be able to break loose with ...e5-e4.

### 10...Bf6



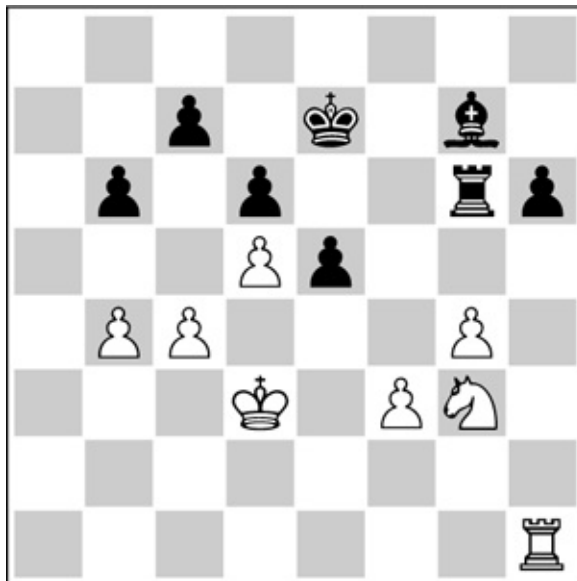
### 11.Rh5

Having done its job, the rook hares back. As White is attacking h6, he doesn't have to be afraid that the a-file falls into the hands of the second player yet.

### 11...Kf7 12.Rh1 Ke7 13.Kd3

Ehlvest has all the time in the world. The king moves to a light square, so as not to allow any 'accidents'.

### 13...Bg7 14.Ng3



Finally the knight leaves its niche, but from the f5-square it will radiate even more strength. The white king can take over its role on e4.

### 14...Bf8?!

A better attempt to stay afloat consisted of 14...Rf6. After 15.Nf5+ Kf7 16.Ke4, the black king proceeds to g6, so as to enable the freeing push ...h6-h5. It is not yet clear how White could have made progress in that case.

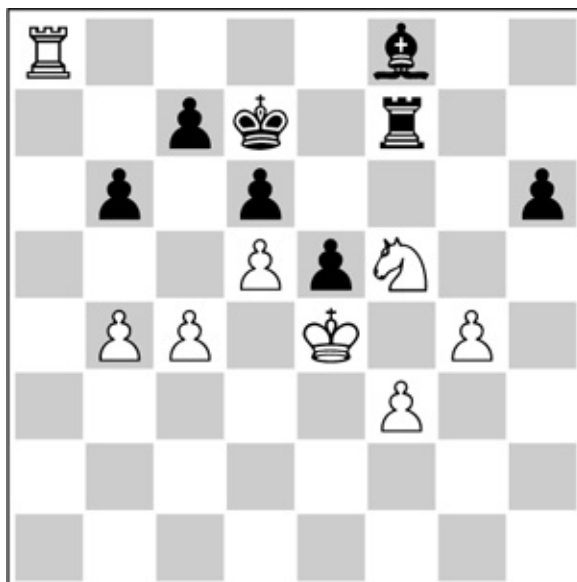
### 15.Ke4 Rf6 16.Nf5+ Ke8

Here also, 16...Kf7 was preferable.

### 17.Ra1!

It is instructive to see how White manages to make use of both of the files that he controls. Now he invades via the a-file.

### 17...Kd7 18.Ra8 Rf7



### 19.b5

According to the motto: ‘fix all the black pawns on the colour of the bishop’, White rules out ...b6-b5 and ...c7-c6.

### 19...Rf6

Black is doomed to complete passivity.

### 20.Ke3

The penultimate stage of the winning plan. The king is on its way to the square h5, where it threatens to enter the black position via g6. Since in principle, Black only has the moves ...Rf6-f7-f6, this plan will decide the issue.

### 20...Rf7 21.Kf2 h5

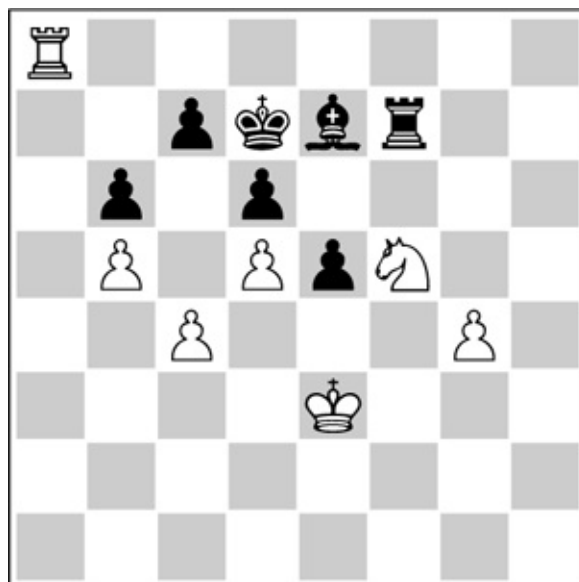
In his desperation, Black tries to undertake something. Although this move rids him of a weakness, the remedy is worse than the disease. The passed pawn that White gets in return is a giant.

### 22.Ke3!

Now that the situation has changed, the king returns to the familiar square e4. There it protects the knight, which allows him to set his g-pawn in motion.

### 22...hxf4 23.fxf4 Be7

Black can no longer sit and watch. After 23...Rf6 24.Ke4 Rf7 25.g5, he would also be done for.



### 24.Rg8!

The final stage of White's winning plan commences. The rook invades via the back rank on the kingside – yet again! – with the intention to swap rooks.

### 24...Bd8 25.Ke4

More precise than the immediate 25.Rg7.

### 25...Rh7 26.Rg7+ Rxc7 27.Nxc7

Black resigned, since the white king will penetrate via f5 and support its passed pawn. From e6, the white knight will be able to support the entire procedure.

In the previous game we have seen that the white player could comfortably increase his advantages. This was mainly thanks to the fact that he possessed the advantage of good knight versus bad bishop. The white knight was clearly superior to its black 'counterpart' and that was one of the reasons why the black player ended up in a passive position. In the following game we see how the white player also manages to create a strong square, after which – analogously to our previous example – he aims for an endgame with good knight versus bad bishop.

We have seen that the possession of a strong square is an important basis to support our own operations. Not only is the opponent 'banging his head against' that square, but it determines, as it were, the future of most of the pieces. In the following game, in which a 17-year-old Kasparov takes on the ladies' ex-World Champion Chiburdanidze, we are treated to an amazing illustration of this theme.

□ **Kasparov, Garry**

■ **Chiburdanidze, Maia**

Baku 1980 (11)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6**

This opening, the King's Indian Defence, was later to become one of Kasparov's own main defensive weapons.

**5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.Be3**

This system carries the name of the Yugoslav grandmaster Svetozar Gligoric. The chief idea behind the text move is to postpone castling for a little longer.

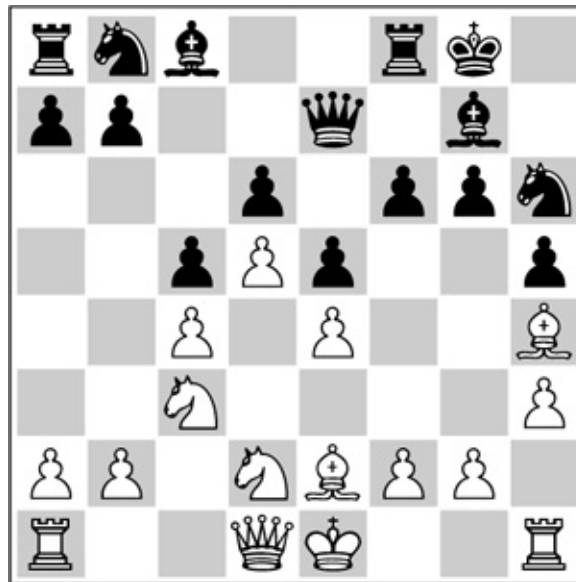
**7...Qe7**

This was also how Bobby Fischer defended against White's plan. Today, 7...Ng4 and 7...Na6 are the fashionable variations.

**8.d5**

8.dxe5 dxe5 9.Nd5 is also known theory; White has slightly better play.

**8...Ng4 9.Bg5 f6 10.Bh4 h5 11.h3 Nh6 12.Nd2c5**



It is useful to examine this position a little more closely. The centre is closed, which means that we are dealing with a pawn chain here. White has more space thanks to his pawn on d5. Nimzowitsch already held a strong view on the way positions with pawn chains were to be treated: 'If you look at the pawns that have been joined together', he said, 'then the rearmost pawns form the base of the pawn chain.' So for White these are the pawns on c4 and e4, and for Black it is the pawn on d6. These bases must be attacked by other pawns, and also with pieces. Concretely: Black must rely on the ...f6-f5 push, whereas White must try



to pry open the c-file with b2-b4, in order to approach the black base at a later stage. The gist of what Nimzowitsch asserts here is correct, but the position he takes up is not very flexible. After all, he disapproved of opening the game on the flank where the opponent is operating, whereas this is exactly what Kasparov is planning to do!

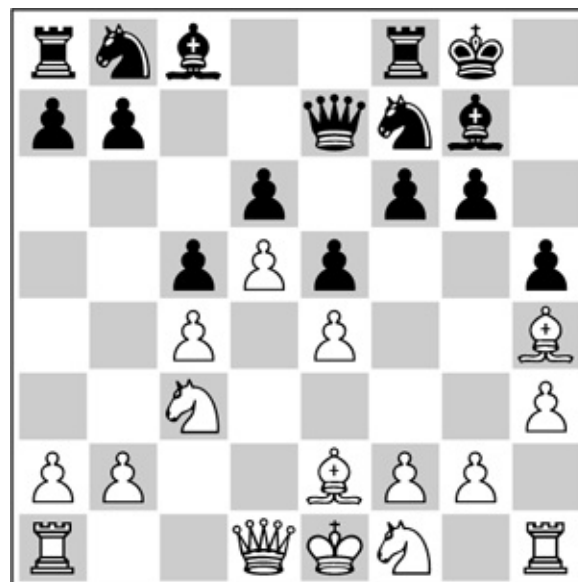
### 13.Nf1!?

This move might still have gained Nimzowitsch's stamp of approval: the knight is on its way to e3, making it as difficult for Black as possible to carry out his thematic pawn push.

### 13...Nf7?!

An aimless move which should have been replaced by 13...Na6.

Incidentally, we might ask why Black did not start this action by playing 13...g5 here. After 14.Bg3 h4 (otherwise this pawn will be hanging) 15.Bh2 f5, Black has met the demands of the position, hasn't she? But if you have studied the beginning of this chapter, you will now understand that Black is strategically in bad shape after 16.Ne3!, after which we can label Black's action as a failure. After 16...fxe4 (in case of 16...f4 17.Ng4, Black's pawn formation is restricted, and White has taken possession of the beautiful light squares) 17.Nxe4, White gains possession of the beautiful e4-square.



### 14.g4!

This would have made Nimzowitsch raise an eyebrow, but White's action is positionally completely sound. Although he weakens the f4-square, he can boast several other successes, as we shall see soon.

### 14...hxg4?!

The normal' continuation here was 14...g5 15.Bg3 h4 16.Bh2 Nh8, after which

the black knight can settle on the strong square f4. Since the kingside is sealed up and Black is thus lacking the usual counterchances with ...f5, White is still clearly better.

Kasparov indicates the following plan for White to pursue: f3, Ne3, Bf1, Bg1, Rh2, Rb1, a3, b4, after which Black must go all out to avoid disaster on the queenside.

An almost identical position occurred in the following game Grooten-Sziva, Eindhoven 1993, where White carried out the above-mentioned plan:

□ **Grooten,Herman**

■ **Sziva,Erika**

Eindhoven 1993



From several of Petrosian's games we know that he used to take great care that the kingside was sealed, to prevent Black from starting actions with ...f5. The former World Champion was known for having the 'patience of a saint' when it came to creating an entrance on the other side of the board. This is also the main theme in this fragment. In the long run, White chooses a set-up with a3 and b4. In the meantime, he tries to transfer his pieces step by step to the queenside.

**16.Bg1 Ng6 17.f3 Nf7 18.Rb1 a5 19.a3 Nf4**

The knight is strong here, but without assistance it cannot accomplish anything.

**20.Bf1 Re8 21.Rh2 Bf8 22.b3 b6 23.Rb2 Be7 24.Ndb1 Qd7 25.Na4 Bd8**

**26.Nbc3 Bc7 27.Ra2 Kg7 28.Rhb2 Qd8**



**29.b4**

Now the moment has come to carry out the carefully-directed action.

**29...axb4 30.axb4 Bd7 31.Nb5 Re7 32.Qb1 Bxb5**

A concession: the light-squared bishop will be sorely missed in the black camp.

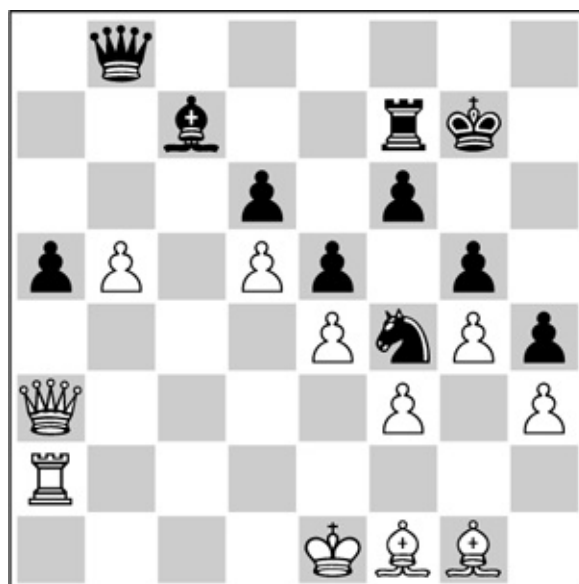
**33.cxb5 cxb4 34.Rc2!**

Recapturing on b4 can wait.

**34...Qb8 35.Qxb4 Nd8 36.Ra3 Ra5 37.Rca2 Rf7 38.Nb2 Nb7**

Black has achieved a decent set-up, but she still cannot prevent the coming difficulties.

**39.Nc4 Rxa3 40.Qxa3 Na5 41.Nxa5 bxa5**



**42.Qe3!**

It is essential for White to carry through the push b5-b6.

**42...Bd8 43.Rb2 a4**

Black plays her only trump card.

**44.b6 Rb7 45.Kd1!**

The correct approach, since the pawn on a4 is a nuisance. White also rules out any possible discovered checks.

**45...Qa8 46.Qa3 Bxb6**

This amounts to capitulation, but there was nothing decent left.

**47.Rxb6 Rxb6 48.Bxb6 Qb8 49.Qb4 a3 50.Kc2**

Please note how important it is that the white king is within the square of the black passed pawn.

**50...Qc8+ 51.Qc4 Qxc4+ 52.Bxc4 Nxh3 53.Be3 Nf4 54.Bxf4 gxf4 55.Bf1 1-0**

Now let us return to the main game.

**15.Bxg4!**

The most important thought behind the previous move. Kasparov exchanges his bad bishop for Black's good one.

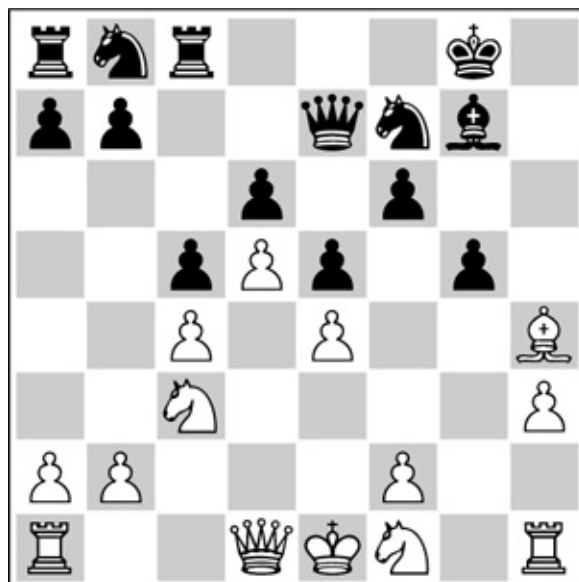
**15...g5**

The black player now realizes that after 15...Bxg4 16.hxg4, followed by 17.Ne3, she can forget about any action with ...f5, and so now she suddenly starts to make haste.

**16.Bxc8 Rxc8**

The critical moment in the game. After 17.Bg3, Black would sacrifice a pawn with 17...f5!? 18.exf5 e4, when the diagonal of the bad bishop is opened and the black pieces come alive via the e5-square.

Also after 17.Qg4 Na6 18.Bg3 Nh6 19.Qe2, Black would have been able to find counter play with 19...f5!?. After 20.exf5, White is prevented from taking control of the position in the nick of time by 20...e4! (better than 20...Nxf5 21.Ne4, when the possession of the e4-square outweighs that of the d4-square) 21.Nxe4 Bxb2, and now unclear complications have arisen, where Black's chances are not worse. However, Kasparov has a fantastic surprise for his opponent.



### 17.Ne3!!

A phenomenal piece sacrifice, which is based on the permanent conquest of the square f5. White also gains control over the open g-file, but Chiburdanidze must at least have looked up in amazement when her opponent gave up an entire piece for these two positional factors.

Is the f5-square that important? In this case, a straightforward ‘yes’ is in order. As Black can forget about ...f5 now, her bishop on g7 is reduced to a ‘statue’. Furthermore, White has an edge in development, enabling him to activate his other pieces and restrict to a maximum Black’s activity.

### 17...gxh4 18.Nf5 Qd8

Slightly better was 18...Qf8, since the queen has to go there anyway, but it does not make much difference.

### 19.Qg4 Ng5 20.Nxh4

Kasparov has reduced his material disadvantage to a pawn for a knight, but that was not what his plan was about. It is much more important that White will drive away the black knight with his h-pawn, and will then make the g-file his sphere of activity.

Incidentally, 20.Nxd6 also looks like a promising possibility. After 20...Rc7 21.Nf5, White will have to clear away the black h-pawn before he can start his actions along the g-file.

### 20...Rc7 21.Nf5 a6 22.h4 Nh7 23.Rg1 Qf8



### 24.Ke2!

Here we see how useful it can sometimes be not to castle. At the moment, the white king is safest in the centre.

### 24...Ra7

If Chiburdanidze had given a pawn with 24...b5 in an ultimate attempt to achieve counterplay, she would also have come up short: 25.cxb5 axb5 26.Nxb5 Rd7 (after 26...Rb7 it becomes clear how strong the knight is on f5, since now the pawn on d6 falls: 27.Nfxd6 is the adequate reply) 27.Rg3, and White is already almost winning here. Black's counterplay will not get off the ground, and via the g-file White will quickly step up the pressure.

### 25.a4

White shows that he has all the time in the world, in spite of his (great) material deficit....b5 is not on the cards for the time being.

### 25...b6 26.Qh5



The diagram position gives a nice picture of the results that White has achieved after his stunning piece sacrifice on the 17th move. Black's three pieces are not functioning at all (the knight on b8 cannot be brought into the game) and a dire lack of space makes all her pieces gasp for air.

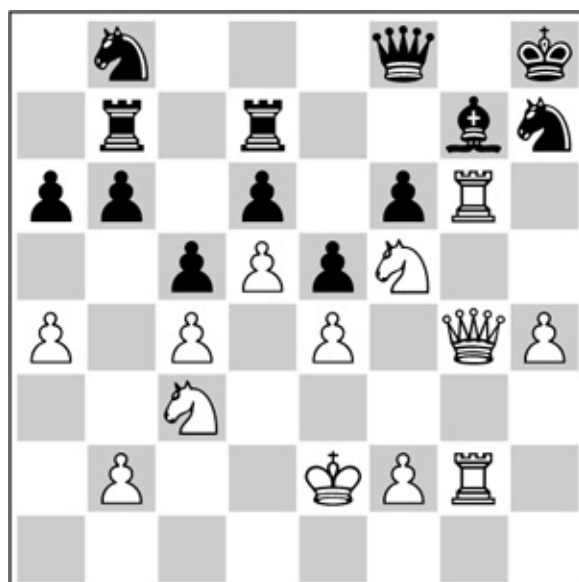
**26...Kh8**

The king would rather move to the other side of the board, but it is impossible to escape from the danger zone.

**27.Rg6 Rd7 28.Rag1 Rab7 29.Qg4 Rbc7**

Black already has no active plan, and she must sit and watch.

**30.Rg2 Rb7**



**31.Kf1!**

It is time for the winning scheme. Without involving his c3 knight in the attack, White cannot win the game. Thus, the job would not be entirely clear-cut after the obvious 31.h5. After 31...Ng5! 32.h6 Bxh6 33.Rxh6+ Rh7, the knight on g5 stops quite a lot of things. Therefore, White wants to play his queen's knight to e2, in order to take control of the g5-square with f2-f4. Black cannot in any circumstance permit herself to play ...exf4, as after Nxf4 she would have to face new horrors.

With his pawn on f4, White can push his h-pawn. With the text move Kasparov vacates the e2-square for the knight, and he first brings his king to the kingside, also because Black will immediately react with ...b6-b5 as soon as the queen's knight is removed from c3.

**31...Ra7 32.Kg1 Rf7 33.Ne2 Qc8**

In her desperation, Chiburdanidze tries to prepare a few 'swindles', but probably it would have been better to play ...b5 without hesitation. With the text move she intends to vacate the f8-square for the knight.

**34.f4?!**

Kasparov consistently continues on the chosen path. But in this position he had a simpler winning plan at his disposal. After 34.Neg3!, the threat of Nh5 could not have been averted, and the bishop on g7 would have been doomed.

**34...b5 35.axb5 axb5 36.cxb5 Rab7 37.h5 Nf8 38.Qh3!**

An elegant move that brings the win within reach. Now the devastating threat is 39.h6 Nxb6 40.hxg6+ Kg8 41.Rxb6 Rxb6 42.Ne7+, winning the queen.

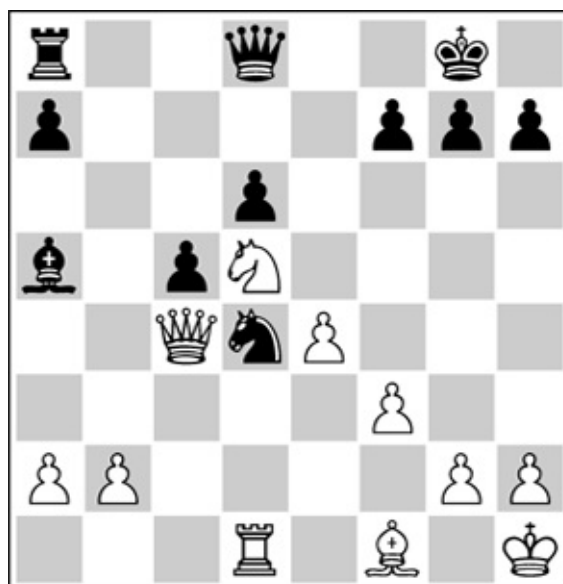
**38...Nxb6 39.hxg6+ Kg8 40.gxf7+ Kf8**

And Black surrendered without waiting for White's reply.

### **9.3 The weak colour complex**

The following position is derived from Nimzowitsch's book *My System*. He describes what can be done by a player who possesses more than one strong square.





Our eye is immediately caught by White's possession of the beautiful squares d5 and c4. He has various pieces which can use these squares: the queen, the bishop and the knight. White's current set-up demands some adaptations from Black. In other words: Black has to reckon with the effects of the white knight on d5.

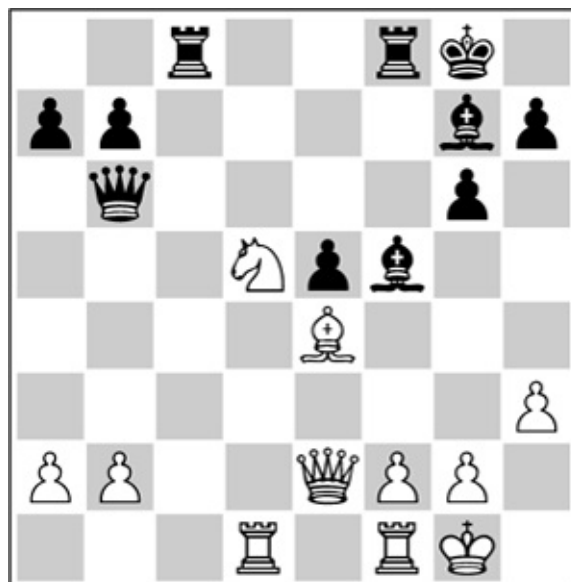
Nimzowitsch now recommends a so-called 'changing of the guard'. He means that White should occupy the c4- and d5-squares with several pieces in turn. For example, with 1.Ne3, followed by 2.Qd5, White can take up a different configuration, and Black has to anticipate this. In this way, White can use the c4-square for his bishop as well as his knight.

Nimzowitsch claims that, provided that White keeps manoeuvring long enough, taking up new configurations every time (and, of course, combining this with other actions), the opponent will sooner or later be wrong-footed. 'You should, as it were, make him 'feel' those strong squares', our former Teacher tells us. In the following example I was able to apply this 'changing of the guard' myself.

□ **Grooten,Herman**

■ **Hazewindus,Nico**

Eindhoven 1982



In this position White controls the beautiful squares e4 and d5. The ultimate goal is to induce Black to exchange the light-squared bishop – of course, without losing control of the e4-square! Thanks to White's strongly centralized position, Black must dance to White's tune. In the meantime, the white knight is stirring up trouble.

**1...Qc5 2.Nc3!**

A strong move. The knight temporarily returns in order to allow the bishop to control b7, and at the same time to vacate the d5-square for another piece.

**2...Rc7 3.Rd5 Qc4 4.Re1**

White keeps his strong central position intact.

**4...Kh8**

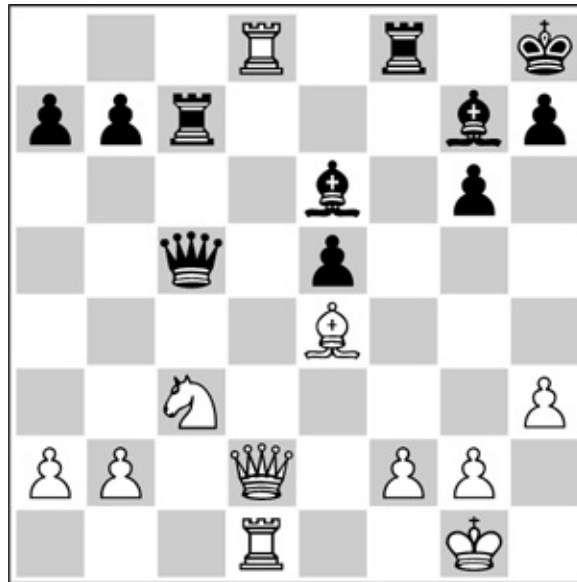
Exchanging queens would have given Black more chances of survival.

**5.Qd2**

White now steers towards a middle-game where his pieces are more effectively placed than Black's.

**5...Be6 6.Rd8 Qc5 7.Rd1**

Now White has also taken firm possession of the d-file.



### **7...Rf7?!**

Jumping from the frying pan into the fire. White is now allowed to carry through his favourite exchange. By the way, it wasn't so easy to find an alternative for Black. Perhaps 6...b6 was better.

### **8.Rxf8+ Qxf8**

Here 8...Bxf8 was probably more tenacious.

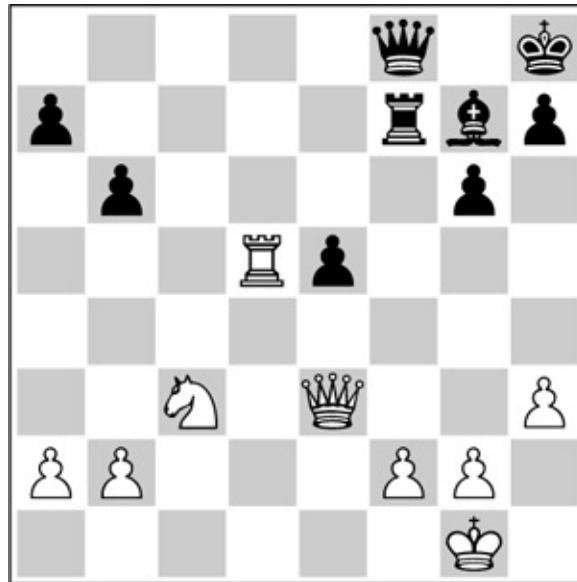
### **9.Qe3!**

A useful insertion, since after the immediate 9.Bd5 Bxd5 10.Nxd5 e4, Black would have at least been able to bring his bishop into play.

### **9...b6 10.Bd5!**

And here we have the third 'changing of the guard'. The bishop has not been on this square yet, and it is not meant to stay here for long. The exchange of the light-squared bishop yields White permanent control of the strong square e4, as soon as he forces an ending of strong knight versus bad bishop.

### **10...Bxd5 11.Rxd5**



**11...e4!?**

Black understands perfectly well what fate is awaiting him. After an arbitrary move there would follow 12.Ne4, tying him up completely. But the pawn sacrifice will not help him either.

**12.Nxe4 Re7**

Black is not consistent. The intention of his previous move was obviously 12... Bxb2, but on closer examination he must have concluded that in that case 13.Qd2! would have been quite unpleasant for him. After the forced 13...Qa3 (White threatened both 14.Rd8+ and 14.Qxb2+), 14.Nd6 (possibly preceded by 14.Rd8+ Kg7) is lethal. After, for instance, 14...Rd7, 15.Qf4! wins.

Now White remains a healthy pawn up.

The game continued:

**13.b3 h6 14.Qd3**

14.h4, followed by g3 and Kg2, was much more accurate here.

**14...Qf4 15.Rd8+ Kh7 16.Qd5**

16.Qc4h5.

**16...h5 17.Ng5+ Kh6 18.Nf3 Rc7?**

Now Black could have stirred up quite a lot of trouble with 18...Re2. After the text move things go downhill quickly.

**19.g3 Qc1+ 20.Kg2 Rc5 21.Qe4**

And Black had seen enough.

It is time we have a look at positions where a larger number of squares have been weakened. The following diagram provides a pretty example.

□ Botvinnik, Mikhail

■ Szilagyi, György

Amsterdam 1966 (1)



Black has exchanged his light-squared bishop for a knight, and although his pieces are reasonably well positioned, this defect in his position is already clearly perceptible.

The white bishop on e2 strives for the beautiful c4-square, in order to exert pressure on the a2-f7 diagonal. Black's major problem is that he has no 'opponent' left to neutralize this pressure. His next move suggests that the black player does not recognize the weakness of his light squares.

**1...c5?**

Now the black position changes from bad to hopelessly lost. Not only does he give up the important central square d5, but he also voluntarily puts a pawn on the colour of his bishop – burying it alive, as it were.

**2.b5!**

In spite of the fact that in principle White, considering he has the bishop pair, should strive for an opening of the position, Botvinnik closes it up. He contents himself with the light squares that have simply fallen into his lap.

We cannot omit an amusing anecdote here. The story goes that Botvinnik's arch-rival David Bronstein once thought 45 minutes after the opening moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6, before deciding on the exchange 4.Bxc6. Afterwards he was asked what made him think so long about this theoretically known continuation. Bronstein replied laconically that with the exchange of his bishop for the knight he had weakened 32 light squares, and that he had wanted to stop

and think how he could deal with this weakening in the further course of the game!

### **2...Ne8?!**

In modern chess we would not hesitate to make the active pawn sacrifice 2...c4!? here. The reasoning behind this move is simple: four pieces (Qe7, Rc8, Nd7, Bb6) are looking at the pawn on c5, and so, abandoning this gem would definitely offset the lack of activity Black will be facing in the game.

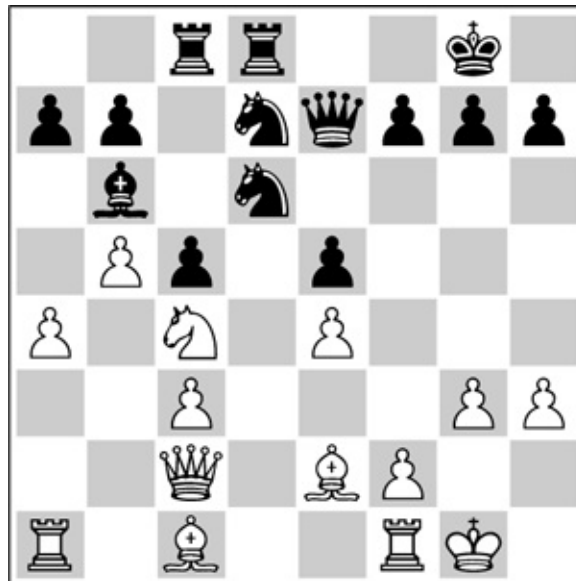
During the analysis of a game where a bishop was hemmed in by a pawn I once heard a Dutch master say: 'Throw away that rubbish, then at least we will have a piece rejoining the game!'

'Probably White would do best to wait with the capture of this pawn. With 2...c4 3.a5 Bc5 4.Kg2, he could have kept Black in the dark as to how (and, more importantly, when!) he was going to take the pawn.

### **3.Nc4**

White 'clears' the square c4 for his bishop, which will now gain in strength.

### **3...Nd6**



### **4.Bg5! f6**

This results in a new weakening of several light squares. Or rather: the diagonal a2-g8 is now extended for the bishop, for since the pawn is no longer on f7, the squares e6, f7 and g8 are seriously weakened. The impact of this weakening will become clear later on.

So, 4.Bg5 is a devious little intermediate move! Black could not very well go for 4...Qxg5 on account of 5.Nxd6 Rb8 (here too, Black's only chance is 5...c4!? 6.Kg2 Rc7, but after 7.Nxc4 Nf8 8.a5 Bc5 9.Rad1, White also keeps an advantage) 6.Bc4 Rf8 7.Bd5, and White wins the pawn on b7, after which he

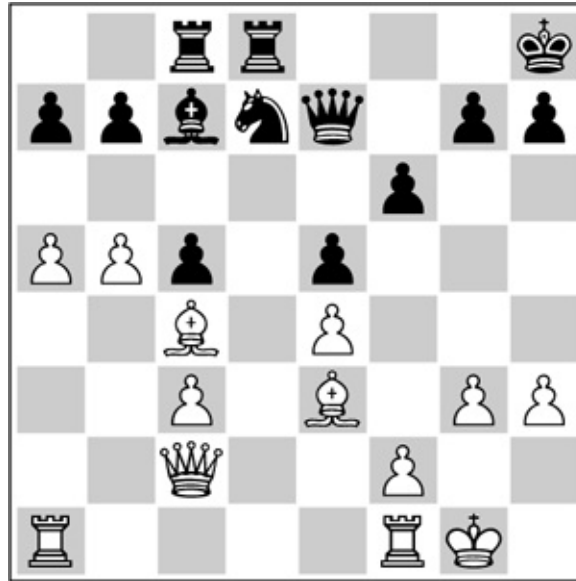
will be able to create a dangerous passed pawn.

4...Nf6 is not so attractive for Black in view of 5.Ne3, and now the d5-square is beckoning the knight.

#### **5.Be3 Nxc4**

This helps White carry out his plan, but good advice doesn't come cheap in such a position.

#### **6.Bxc4+ Kh8 7.a5 Bc7**



A suitable moment to take a closer look. White has almost everything a chess player can want, but how can he make progress? Or rather: how can he make optimum use of his supremacy on the light squares?

Here again, we must act schematically and ask ourselves which pieces we would prefer to exchange and which pieces we want to retain on the board. In order to make optimal use of the light-squared bishop, it is important to trade off all the rooks. Then White will be able to set up a battery on the a2-g8 diagonal with his queen and this bishop, creating mating patterns around the black king. This plan is carried out flawlessly by Botvinnik.

#### **8.Rfd1 Nf8**

Black cannot prevent the exchange of all the rooks, as otherwise White would double rooks and exploit the d-file.

#### **9.Qa2 Rxd1+ 10.Rxd1 Rd8 11.Rxd8 Bxd8 12.a6**

Botvinnik carries on with his light-square strategy for the time being, and with the text he rids himself of a slight weakness. Black must allow himself to be bricked in further.

#### **12...b6**

12...bxa6 hardly came into consideration, since then Black would succumb to

the weaknesses of his pawns on a7 and c5.

### **13.Kg2**

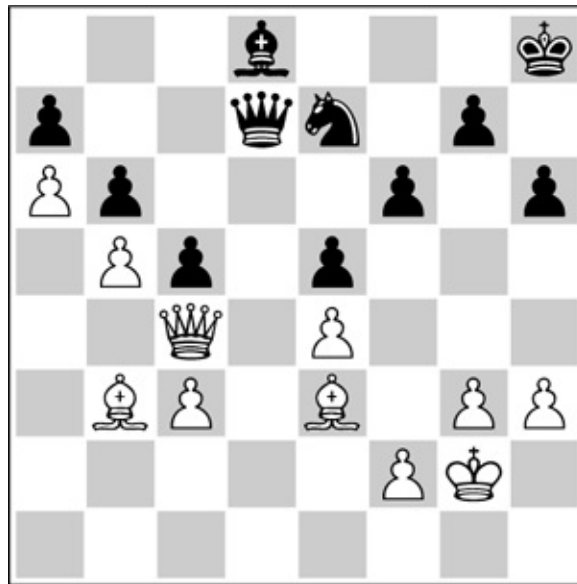
This move also fits into White's light-square strategy. White has plenty of time and he leaves nothing to chance. The pawn on h3 is protected and a possible check on the back rank is ruled out.

### **13...Qd7 14.Qe2!**

White now prepares to set up the battery.

### **14...Ng6 15.Bb3 Ne7 16.Qc4 h6**

Black's position has become totally passive.



### **17.Qf7!**

Here it becomes clear why forcing the weakening on the 18th move was so important. The queen now invades the black camp unhindered.

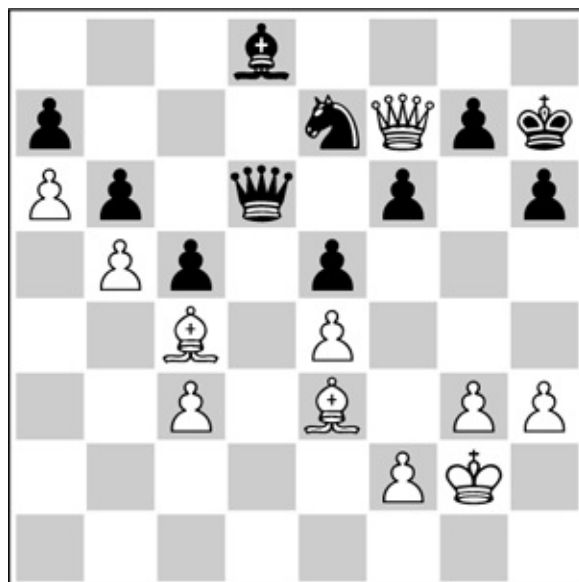
### **17...Kh7**

Obviously, 17...Qxb5 was out of the question on account of 18.Qe8+ Kh7 19.Qxd8 Qxb3, and now the black knight is also hanging.

### **18.Bc4 Qd6**

Black can do nothing now, and White can prepare the final act.





### 19.h4?!

Botvinnik strictly adheres to his clear-cut plan. If he had kept an open eye here, he would doubtlessly have found 19.g4!. This interesting thought was uttered by several pupils in my training groups. White suddenly threatens 20.Bxh6, when 20...Kxh6 fails to 21.Qh5#. Black is forced to play 19...Kh8. The win for White is now quite instructive. His pieces are cooperating elegantly: 20.Qf8+ Kh7 21.Bg8+ Kh8 22.Be6+ Kh7 23.Bxh6!! (a beautiful apotheosis) 23...gxh6 (23...Qxe6 24.Qxg7#; 23...Kxh6 24.Qh8+ Kg5 25.Qh5+ Kf4 26.g5! Qxe6 27.Qh4+ and mate) 24.Bf5+, winning the queen.

### 19...Qd1

After 19...Qd7 White should continue with 20.f3, in order to make g3-g4 possible again. That would soon have broken all resistance as well.

### 20.Qe8

White draws the mating net tighter. There is no remedy against 21.h5, followed by 22.Bf7, 23.Bg6+ and 24.hxg6#. Black's panic reaction does not solve anything either.

**20...f5 21.exf5 Nxf5 22.Bg8+ Kh8 23.Bf7+Kh7 24.Qg8#**

**1-0**

We have learned here that you should not give up your bishop pair without a fight. Of course, all depends on the specific characteristics of the position, but in the above position it soon became clear that the white bishop would become a 'murder weapon'. That was mainly connected with the pawn structure in the centre: the fixed pawns on e4 and e5, which made the light squares in the black camp weak. The principles we discovered in the previous fragment also apply in the following instructive game fragment.

□ Stean, Michael

■ Planinc, Albin

Moscow 1975 (9)



White has the bishop pair, and especially the bishop on c4 catches the eye. Just as in the previous fragment, the bishop does not have an ‘opponent’, and due to, among others, the fixed structure of the pawns on e4 and e5, the light squares in the black camp have been thoroughly weakened again. The weaknesses in Black’s pawn structure on the queenside also stand out. In particular, the b6-square is a source of worry for the black player. With his next move White prepares to expose these weaknesses.

**1.Bb3!**

Stean vacates the c4-square for his knight and also protects the pawn on c2, enabling him to move his queen away from d1 and contest the d-file with his rooks.

**1...c5**

Black is weakening even more light squares, but here this is dire necessity. There is nothing sensible to think of against the above-mentioned white plan. Planinc resigns himself to the fate of a passive defender and tries to build a solid set-up.

**2.Qe2 b6 3.Rfd1 Qc7 4.c3 Nc6**

The knight could not step inside: 4...Nd3? would lose a piece after 5.Nc4.

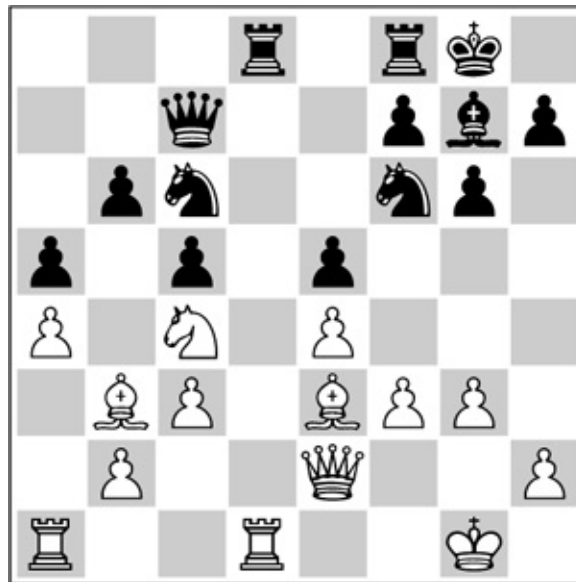
**5.Nc4 Nf6**

White now holds all the trumps, but he must choose his plan.

In the previous fragment we have seen that exchanging off all the rooks helps White, but this can wait until later. At this moment it is more important for

White to search for a target in the enemy camp. One possibility is to play for the beautiful square d5 with 6.Bg5, followed by 7.Bxf6, 8.Ne3 and 9.Nd5, but that seems out of place here, since the presence of opposite-coloured bishops may give Black drawing chances. It is better to direct his attention to the queenside, where the weak brother on b6 must be kept under close watch.

The squares b3, c4, b5, a6 and d5 are completely in White's hands, and so with his queen, bishop and knight, he can perform the by now well-known 'changing of the guard'. The first thing White strives for is to get his queen on b5 (or else on a6) and his knight on c4.



### 6.Na3 Na7

Black immediately reacts to this plan, and so White has to think up something new.

### 7.Qc4!

A very deep move. White is looking for a set-up in which he can attack the pawn on b6, and he wants to do this from the b3-square.



With a knight on c4 (after he has exchanged all the rooks), the pawn on b6 can only be protected by the knight on a7. The big question is what White should do with his bishop in the meantime. Stean has seen the answer to this question very sharply: the bishop is played to a6 via d1 and e2, in order to eliminate the defender on c8.

It is remarkable how a grandmaster manages to formulate such a plan, but as we have seen before, this schematic way of thinking is not only important in endgames, but also in middlegames, especially with a static pawn structure.

**7...Rfe8 8.Kg2**

White has plenty of time and he feels more comfortable with his king on this light square. We have also seen this principle in the previous fragment.

**8...h6**

Tarrasch once said that a passive position carries the seed of defeat. Here this saying appears to hold true, since now that the black player must take up a wait-and-see attitude, he can easily be led astray. With the text, he weakens his king position slightly.

**9.Rxd8**

Finally White commences with the above-mentioned plan. First the rooks must disappear.

**9...Rxd8 10.Rd1 Rxd1 11.Bxd1**

This is a welcome bonus, since the bishop had to be played to e2 anyway.

**11...Bf8 12.Be2 Kg7 13.Qb3 Ne8**

Now it is high time for Black to take measures, otherwise he will be counted out mercilessly.

**14.Ba6 Nd6**



Black has barely succeeded in keeping the white knight from c4, but his knight manoeuvre is a concession to something else: the influence on the central square d5.

### 15.Qd5

White doesn't need to be told twice. Now that the d5-square has been abandoned, the queen jumps to it, creating new threats. This is another beautiful illustration of what is meant by 'changing of the guard'. White manoeuvres on the weak squares until the opponent has been wrong-footed.

### 15...Ne8

The alternative is 15...f6, but that would extend the a2-g8 diagonal, and since all the rooks have been traded off, there would immediately appear mating patterns as soon as White manages to set up his battery. So he would continue with 16.Nc4 Nac8 17.f4 exf4 18.gxf4, and Black can no longer deal with the threat of 20.e5.

### 16.Nc4



### 16...Nf6

Black gives up the fight. After the normal 16...f6, White would have two pretty methods to crown his strategy:

A) The *petit combinaison* 17.Nxb6: after 17...Qxb6 18.Bc4 the battery has been set up again, and 18...Qxb2+ 19.Kh3 is of no avail;

B) 17.Qa8! Kf7 18.Bb7 wins a piece.

The best move in these circumstances was 16...Bd6, but now White again has the subtle queen move 17.Qa8!, and the black position collapses: 17...Qb8 18.Qxb8 Bxb8 19.Nxb6, and the loss of another pawn cannot be averted.

### 17.Qxe5

White accepted the gift and did not have much trouble to convert it into a win.

We conclude with a game in which White invests material in order to obtain supremacy on a certain colour. In the following game, Marcel Píket, the elder brother of the well-known Dutch grandmaster Jeroen, catches his opponent unawares with several sharp sacrifices.

QP 4.6 (A46)

□ **Píket, Marcel**

■ **Fernandez Aguado, Enrique**

Groningen Ech-jr 1985/86 (5)

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 e6 3.Nf3 h6 4.Bxf6 Qxf6 5.e4 d6 6.Nbd2 Nd7 7.c3 e5 8.h4 c6 9.Bd3 Be7 10.Nc4 0-0 11.Ne3 Re8 12.Kh1 Bf8 13.g3 Qd8 14.d5



### 14...cxd5?

A positional mistake which will cause quite a lot of trouble for Black. He surrenders the d5-square without a fight. As we will see later, White's attacking operations will all be directed via this square, and other weakened light squares.

### 15.Nxd5 Nf6 16.Bb5!

Putting a spoke in Black's wheel. Probably he thought that giving up the d5-square would be compensated for by active piece play after ...Be6. After the text he is obliged to make an unnatural rook move.

### 16...Re6

As is easy to verify, both 16...Nd7 and 16...Bd7 meet with great obstacles. After the former White will clearly be pulling the strings with 17.a4! a6 18.Bc4, and after the latter things will be even worse: 17.Nxf6+ gxf6 18.Bxd7 Qxd7 19.g4!, with complete domination.



Now White has a nasty surprise for his opponent.

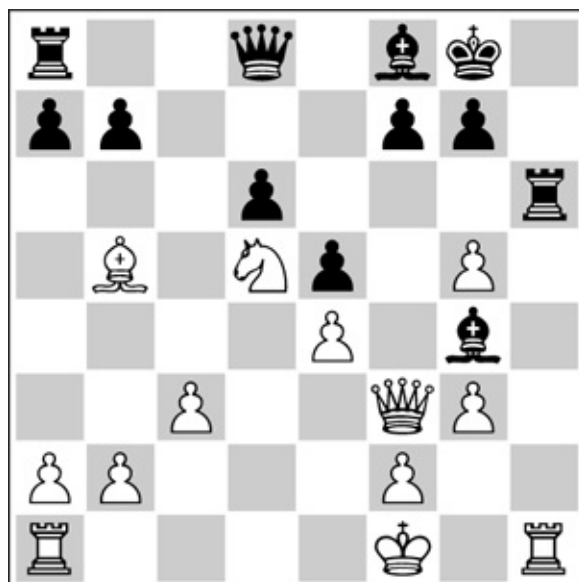
**17.Ng5!**

A well-timed piece sacrifice which exposes the shortcomings in Black's position. The sacrifice must be accepted.

**17...hxc5 18.hxc5 Ng4**

Black quickly returns the material, since after, for instance, 18...Nxd5 19.exd5 Rg6 20.Qh5, he would soon be mated.

**19.Qxg4 Rh6 20.Qf3 Bg4**



The black player had pinned his last hopes on this move, but again White has looked further than the end of his nose. Incidentally, after 20...Rxf1+ 21.Qxf1 White would only have had a small, though tangible advantage.



### 21.Qxg4!

A double rook sacrifice that cannot be accepted. This means that the light squares will now be permanently in White's hands.

### 21...Rxb1+ 22.Kg2 Rh7

If Black accepts the second rook with 22...Rxa1, White opens up the light-square complex with 23.g6. Now Black only has one defence: 23...Be7 (23...Rc8? loses by force to 24.Bd7 Rc4 25.gxf7+ Kxf7 26.Qe6#), but then White continues his light-square strategy with 24.Bd7! Kf8 25.gxf7 Bf6 (on 25...Kxf7, White gives mate with 26.Be6+ Kf8 27.Qh5 Qe8 28.Qh8#) 26.Be8, and there is nothing left for Black but to enter a hopeless endgame with 26...Qxe8 27.fxe8Q+ Rxe8 28.Qf5 Rxa2 29.g4 Kg8 30.g5 Bd8 31.g6, and now mate is not far off either.

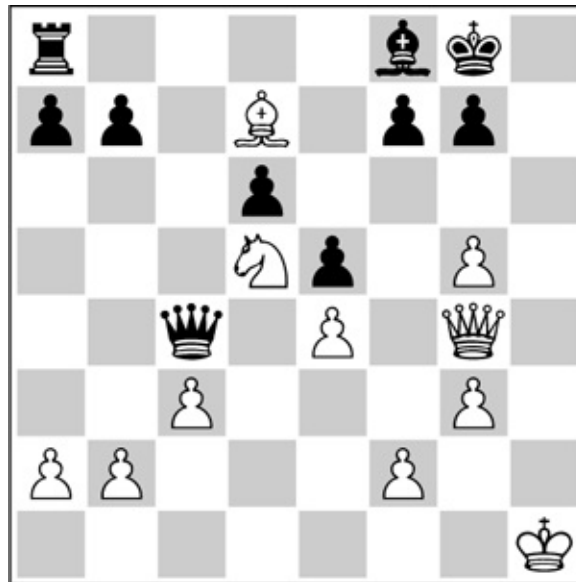
### 23.Rh1!

Another very good move. The black rook is an important defender of its king and therefore has to be exchanged.

### 23...Rxb1 24.Kxb1 Qc8?!

After this move the game is, in essence, decided. But 24...Be7 would run into the same refutation as in the previous variation: 25.g6 Bf6 26.Bd7, and the combined power of queen, bishop plus knight will soon be too much for Black.

### 25.Bd7 Qc4



### 26.Ne3?!

White had to be careful, as Black had created several counterchances with 26...Qf1+. But here Piket fails to finish the job in style. With the pointed 26.Nf6+! White could have elegantly combined attack with defence: 26...gxf6 27.gxf6+ Kh8 28.Qh3+ Kg8 29.Bf5, and apart from the fact that he is threatening to give

mate, White has prevented the most important enemy checks (...Qf1 and ... Qxe4).

**26...Qxa2 27.g6!**

Of course, White again breaks open the light-square complex.

**27...Be7**

A final attempt to activate an inactive piece.

**28.Nd5**

This is where the knight belongs!

**28...Bf6 29.Qh3**

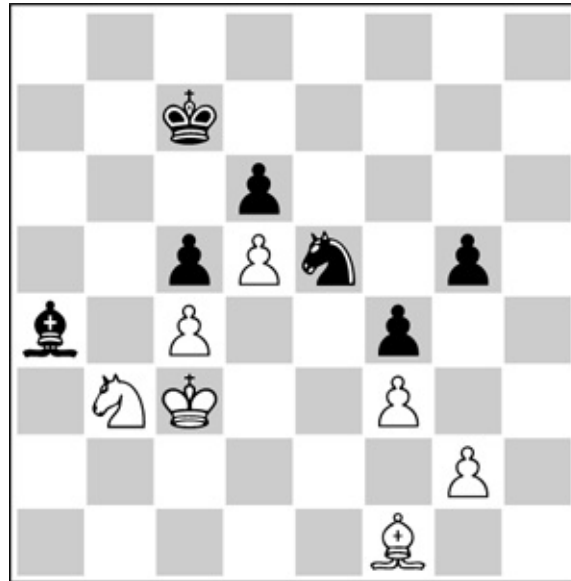
White now has several ways to conclude the game, but he chooses a stylish one:

**29...Qb1 30.Kh2**

And Black resigned, as after 30...fxg6 he is knocked out with the stylish 31.Be6+ Kf8 32.Qh8#.

## Exercises

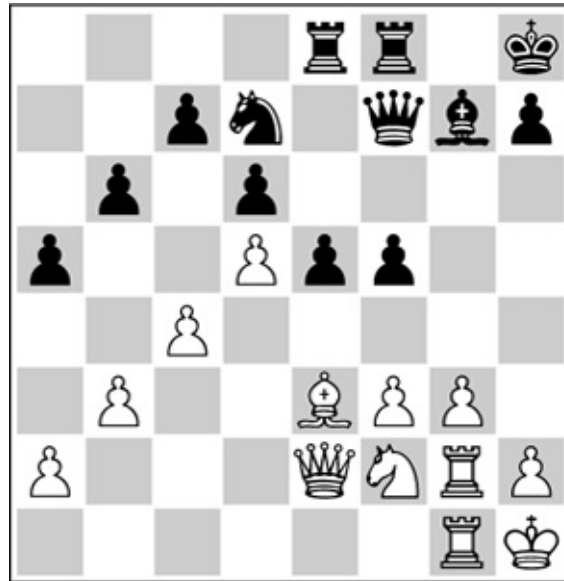
9.1



Is it good for Black to liquidate to an end- White considered the time was ripe for game of knight versus bishop? In other words: can he win after 46...Bxb3 47.Kxb3? Work out a winning plan, even if you opt for another possibility.

[Solution](#)

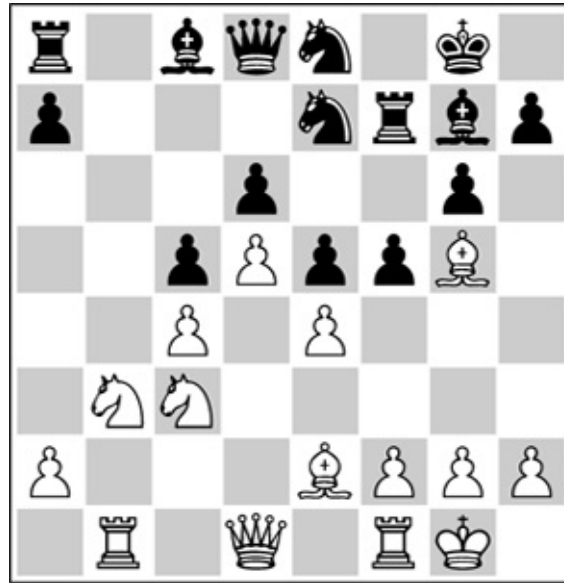
9.2



How does White create a strong square in this position? Next, indicate in words what White's plan should be after that.

[Solution](#)

9.3



White considered the time was ripe for **15.exf5**, after which Black felt compelled to play **15...Bxf5**, so that White could focus on conquering the strong square e4. How did he do this, and which pieces should he exchange to achieve the ‘ideal position’?

[Solution](#)

9.4



- a) With which move does White create a strong square deep in the enemy ranks?
- b) What is the correct plan for White after this?

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 10

# The pawn islands theory

### 10.1 Introduction

In the table with 'Steinitz's Elements', the 'weak pawn' and the 'passed pawn' are labelled as strategic factors. We have seen how a player can 'tack' against weak pawns, and of the passed pawn we know that Nimzowitsch spoke of the 'lust to expand' of this smallest chess piece.

In this chapter we will deal with the 'pawn islands theory', with which we mean the following.

**Definition:**

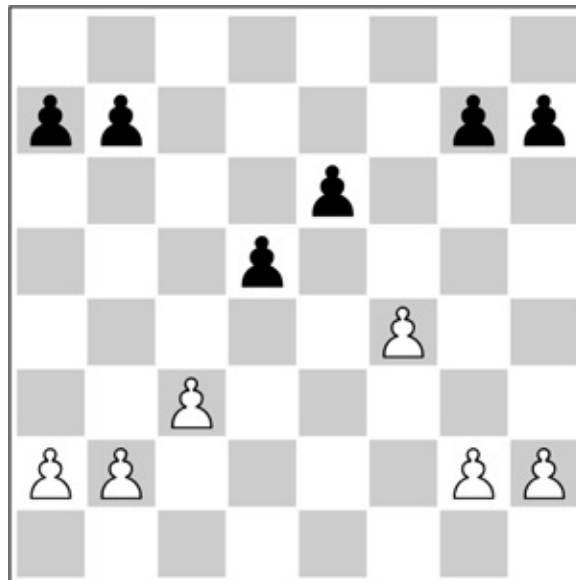
- The player who has the fewest pawn islands, has the advantage.

It is important to define what we mean by a pawn island.

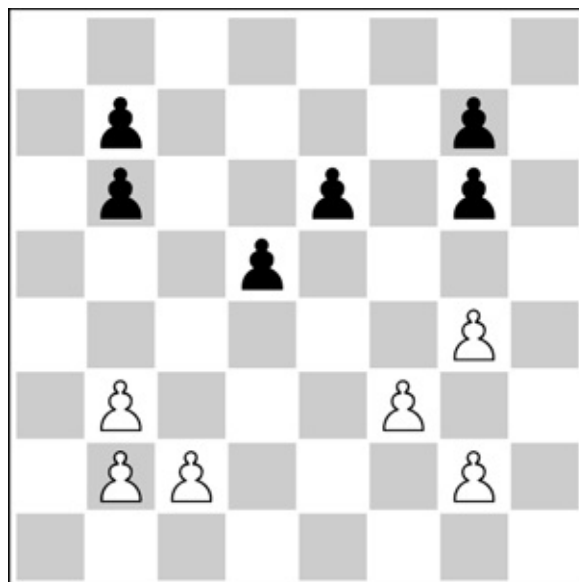
**Definition:**

- By a pawn island we mean one or more pawns that are connected with each other in one way or another.

A diagram will make a lot of things clear.



In the next picture, we see four doubled pawns. We can still regard the pawn formations b2, b3 and c2, as well as f3, g2 and g4, as pawn islands, because they show some kinship.



On the basis of the pawn islands theory, White is strategically better in the first schematic diagram. The reason for this is easy to grasp. Because he has fewer pawn islands, he has fewer weaknesses in his position. It is economically sound for pawns to protect each other. If a piece has to take over this protection, it loses activity. The more islands, the greater the possibility of weak pawns.

Since the player with more islands is structurally worse, he must look for dynamic compensation. If we look for such pawn formations in a database, we can find enough games where these dynamic factors play a more important role than the structural disadvantages in the pawn formation. In fact, the pawn islands theory is the chess rule that has the most exceptions.

To keep the picture clear, I have distinguished between the 'pros' and 'cons'. In 10.2 we will see in which cases islands are a disadvantage. In 10.3 we see instances where the side with more pawn islands still gets the better of the play.

## 10.2 When are pawn islands disadvantageous?

It is useful to formulate a number of criteria in order to reach a correct verdict about a position. In fact, we have to know which features apply if we want to know when a player has problems with his pawn structure. For this purpose, I have investigated a great number of games in order to get an idea of what these problems are. This has enabled me to make the following subdivision:

### A) Problems in the middlegame

#### A1) Passive protection by pieces

#### A2) Positional blockade by enemy pieces

### B) Problems in the endgame

I shall illustrate these cases with the help of examples.



## A) Problems in the middlegame

### A1) Passive protection by pieces

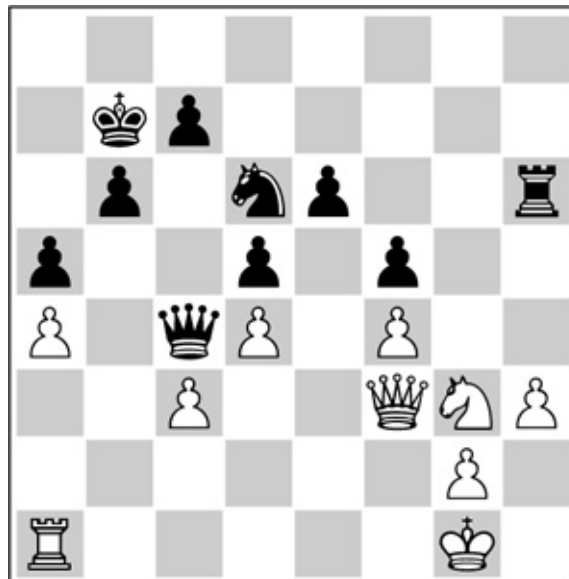
In a position with mainly major pieces on the board, the side with more pawn islands will often start to feel the weaknesses in his pawn formation. If the opponent can target these weaknesses, the logical consequence will be that the pawn must be protected by pieces, and, consequently, these pieces become less mobile. It is not surprising that in such cases the other side will often be able to organize an attack on the king. We can see a beautiful illustration in the following example.

□ **Gligoric, Svetozar**

■ **Keres, Paul**

Zurich ct 1953 (28)

In the diagram position we can observe that Black is better according to the pawn islands theory: White has weak pawns on a4 and c3, Black has one at most: on e6.



Since White must defend the weak pawns with his pieces, he is forced into a passive role, and Black can comfortably prepare an attack on the white king.

**1...Qb3!**

Black activates his queen, which will have its say on the second rank.

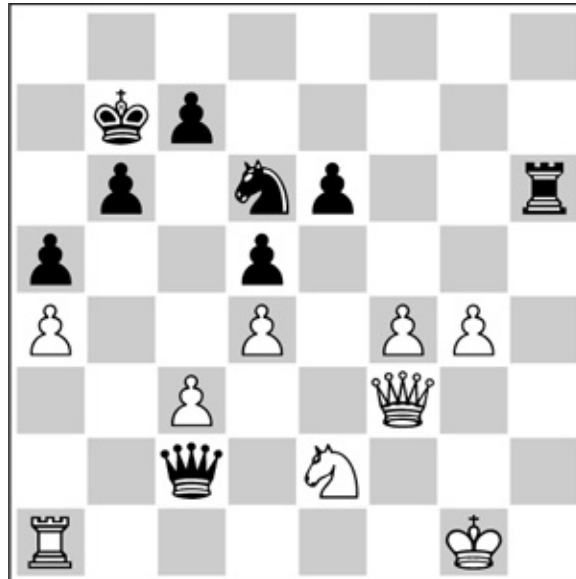
**2.Ne2**

The alternative 2.Qd3 Qb2 3.Rb1 Qa2 4.Qd1 Rg6 5.Ne2 would have been no bed of roses either after 5...Ne4.

**2...Qc2 3.g4?**

A bad move that hastens White's downfall, but there is no satisfactory answer to the threat of ...Rg6, followed by ...Ne4, with which Black slowly mounts the pressure.

**3...fxg4 4.hxg4**



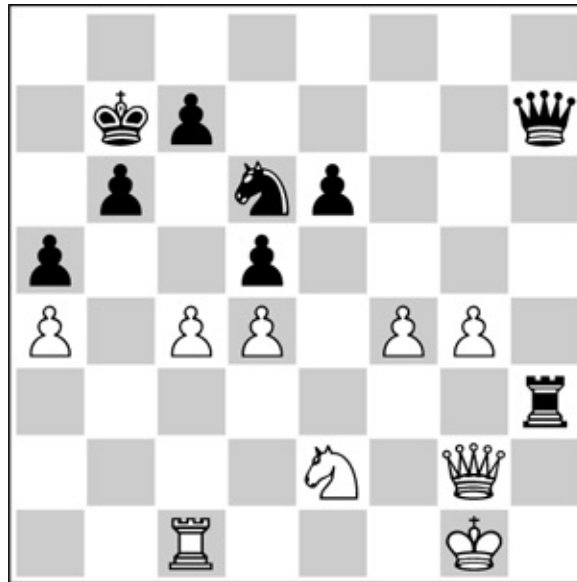
**4...Rh4**

Even stronger is 4...Qh7!, when the invasion of the rook, and that of the knight via the e4-square, would be virtually decisive.

**5.Rc1 Qh7!**

One move later Keres finds the same powerful attacking idea. It is interesting to see how the black queen participates in the attack via both the open h-file and the b1-h7 diagonal. The helpless positions of the white pieces also catch the eye. Since they must protect the weaknesses, they are not capable of dealing with the following blitzkrieg attack.

**6.c4 Rh3 7.Qg2**



**7...Qd3!**

The black queen pays another visit. This time it is immediately decisive.

**8.cxd5 Ne4 9.dxe6 Qe3+ 10.Kf1 Rf3+ 0-1**

The white player in the previous fragment was defeated by a lack of activity of his own pieces, whereas we could see that the black pieces cooperated well.

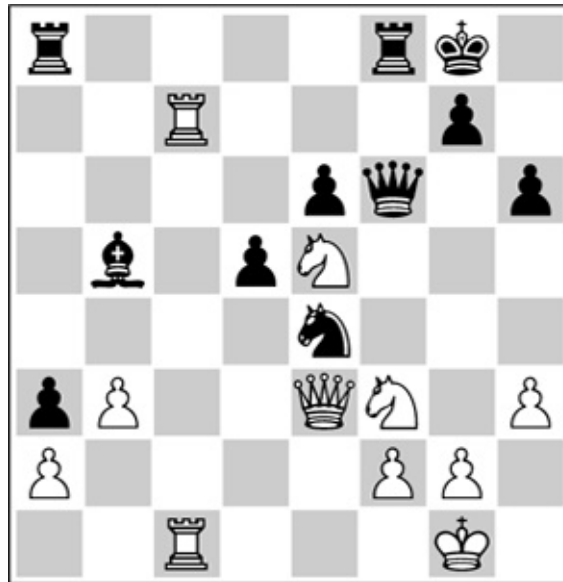
## **A2) Positional blockade by enemy pieces**

If a pawn structure is blockaded by enemy pieces, this will mean that the prospects for the defender are not so rosy. Our teacher Nimzowitsch of days past has bequeathed to us his famous 'blockade strategy'. In simple words, his theory boils down to the fact that it is very pleasant if we have blockaded the enemy's pawn formation with pieces. If your pawns cannot move forward, in practice this will mostly imply that your pieces will be forced into a defensive role and will be craving for activity. If we translate this into the pawn islands theory, we see that in general the side with the most islands is in greater danger of being blockaded. This is because he has fewer pawns at hand to remove a possible blockade. We can see the advantages of a blockade in the following example:

□ **Manolov,Ivan**

■ **Levacic,Patrick**

Burgas 1991 (2)



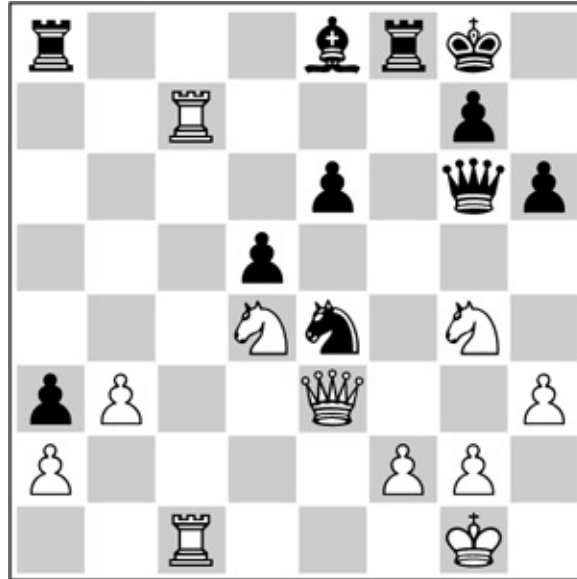
Prior to this fragment White, following Nimzowitsch's blockade strategy, has given up his central pawns with d4xc5 and e5xf6, in order to control the squares d4 and e5 with his pieces. In the diagram position it becomes clear that he has built up a splendid blockade on the dark squares in the centre. The white knights have a firm grip on the position and they cannot readily be driven away by the black pieces. As the black pawns on e6 and d5 are kept under control, Black misses the dynamism that he should have in compensation for the positional defect in his pawn structure. In the following, the gravity of Black's problems is made clear.

### **1.Ng4! Qg6**

If Black offers the exchange of queens with 1...Qf4, he will land in a hopeless endgame where the weaknesses will soon make themselves felt, as is illustrated by the line 2.Qxf4 Rxf4 3.Nd4, and White wins material.

### **2.Nd4 Be8**

Also after 2...h5 3.Ne5 Qf6 4.f4!, White is pulling the strings.



**3.f3**

The only active black piece is pushed from its pedestal.

**3...Ng5 4.h4 h5**

This move loses material, but the game would also have been over after a knight move. The pawn on e6 will fall, and with it Black's position collapses.

**5.Ne5 Nh3+ 6.Kh2 Qf6 7.Kxh3**

**1-0**

We have seen here that the occupation of the centre with pawns is not always a goal in itself. What is more: White has given up his two centre pawns in order to build up a complete blockade on the dark squares in the centre. The black pieces had to protect the weak pawns and could not improve themselves, because the white knights on the squares d4 and e5 played a very dominant role.

That a tactically well-versed player like Tal was also capable of manoeuvring against an enemy pawn structure we can see in the following instructive example:

□ **Tal, Mikhail**

■ **Byrne, Robert**

**Moscow 1971 (4)**



### 1.Qd3!

A multifunctional move. First of all White focuses on the weak pawn at d6, trying to induce it to move forward. If Black is forced to push ...d6-d5 and White can keep the square e5 blocked, then the black bishop will lose a great deal of its activity.

The second intention of the text move is to attack the pawn on a6, and the third idea is to shield White's own kingside with Qd3-g3. Finally, White wants to make the knight move Nd2-c4 possible – another reason to move the queen away, ruling out the pawn fork.

### 1...Qf7

According to Tal, Black should have preferred 1...Bc8.

### 2.Qg3!

Obviously, Tal does not exchange the f2 pawn for the d6 pawn, even though this would not be a bad decision according to the pawn islands theory! His king would then be in danger, whereas after the text move he has a tangible positional advantage and Black does not obtain any counterplay.

### 2...Qf5

Also after 2...Qf4 3.Qxf4 Rxf4 4.Ne4 d5 5.Nc5, White has a big advantage, since he has managed to block the enemy pawns on the – for Black – wrong colour.

### 3.Nc4!?

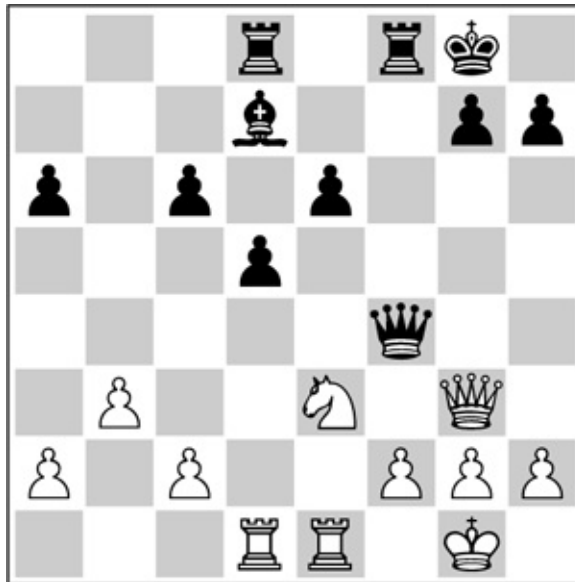
3.Nf3 was another (good) idea.

### 3...d5

This 'suicidal push' is more or less forced, as Black would also be in very bad shape after 3...Qxc2 4.Rd2, followed by 5.Nxd6. 4.Ne3

The knight cannot go to the beautiful square e5 just yet, as then Black would take on c2.

**4...Qf4?!**

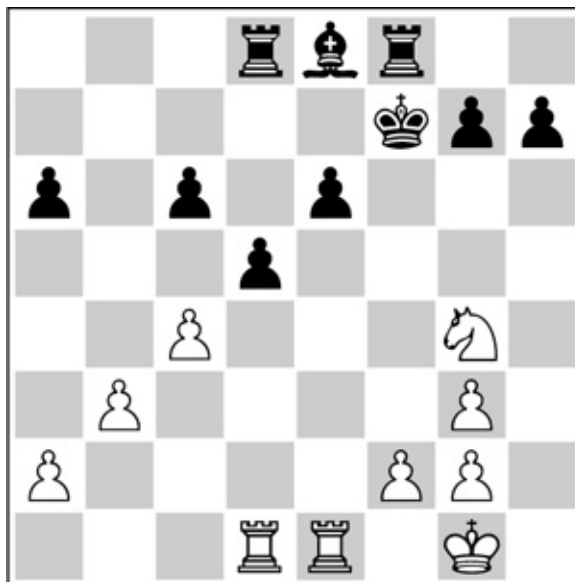


In principle Black would have done better to keep the queens on the board. In the ensuing endgame he has no chance.

**5.Ng4!**

White now exchanges the queens in even more favourable circumstances.

**5...Qxg3 6.hxg3 Kf7 7.c4 Be8**



**8.Rd4**

Tal himself thought that 8.Ne5+ was the correct continuation. After 8...Ke7 9.Rd4 c5 10.Rg4 Rg8 11.cxd5 Rxd5 12.Nf3, he claims that Black is positionally

bankrupt. That is quite questionable. In earlier chapters we have been able to see that an endgame of good knight versus bad bishop is almost always very promising for the side with the knight. The power of the knight increases when more pawns are fixed on the – for White – right colour.

Presumably, 8.c5 was the best continuation here, possibly followed by f2-f4.

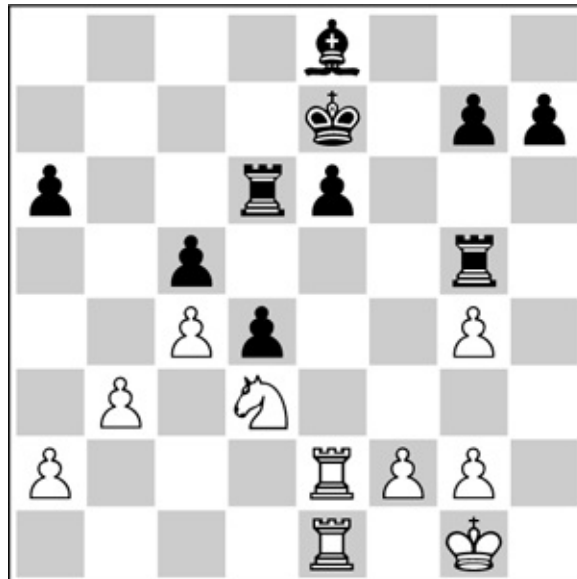
### 8...c5

This attempt to become active will backfire on Black, but otherwise White could have established a complete blockade with 9.c5 after all. Another winning plan for White consists of exchanging on d5 and then switching the rook to the queenside via d4.

### 9.Rd2

Better than 9.Rf4+?!, which would quite unnecessarily give Black counter chances with 9...Kg8 10.Rxe6 Rxf4 11.gxf4 dxc4 12.Rxa6 c3.

**9...d4 10.Rde2 Rd6 11.Ne5+ Ke7 12.Nd3 Rf5 13.g4! Rg5**



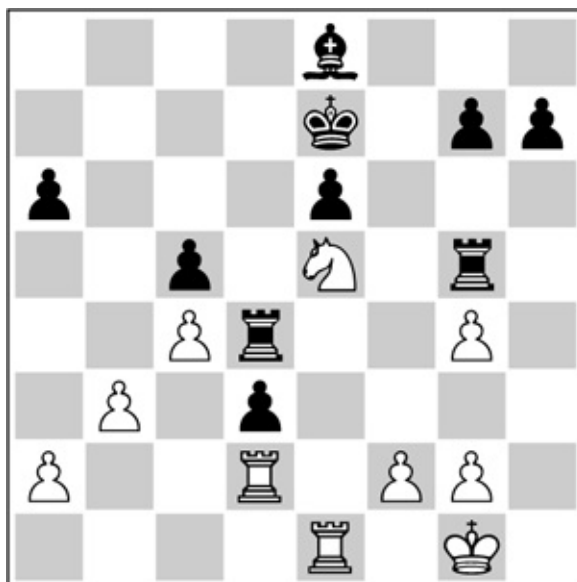
The rook is now caught in broad daylight, and the win is not far off.

### 14.Ne5d3 15.Rd2

Also possible was 15.Nxd3 Rxg4 16.Nxc5, with a decisive advantage.

### 15...Rd4





**16.g3!**

This prepares 17.f4, compelling Black to give up the exchange. Tal finishes the job without trouble.

**16...h5 17.f4 Rxc4 18.Nxc4 hxc4 19.f5 Bc6 20.Rxe6+ Kd7 21.Rg6 Be4  
22.Rxc7+Kd6 23.f6**

**1-0**

### **B) Problems in the endgame**

The previous fragments showed a clear pattern. In general, the fewer pieces there are on the board, the better it is for the player with the fewer pawn islands. This sounds logical, since the player with the most islands, and consequently the most weaknesses, must search for active piece play. In practice, the fewer pieces he has at his disposal, the less counter play he will have.

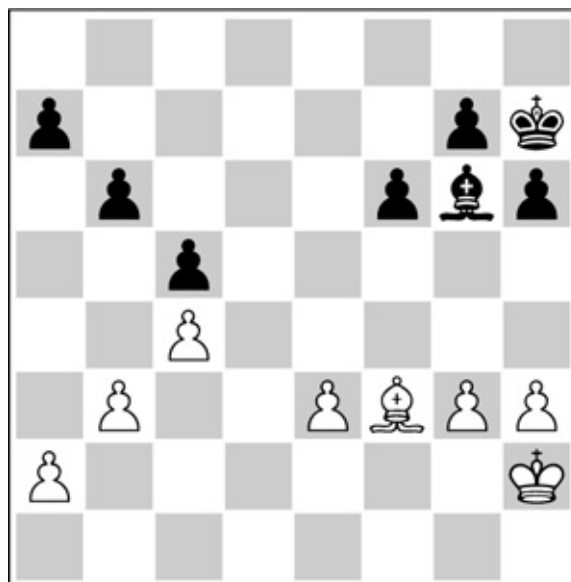
In the Tal-Byrne fragment we saw how the white player managed to blockade the enemy centre in the middlegame, enabling him to comfortably liquidate to the endgame, where the weaknesses made themselves felt.

In the following fragment we see a flawless technical achievement by Keres, who succeeds in exploiting a few positional advantages in a bishop ending.

□ **Smyslov,Vasily**

■ **Keres,Paul**

Moscow ch-URS 1951 (14)



In this position Black clearly has the better prospects. The advantages are:

- According to the pawn islands theory, White has more weak pawns. Because of the pawn on e3 White is forced to concede the beautiful e5-square to his opponent, to which the black king can be played;
- As the white pawns on the queenside are on the colour of his bishop, and they can be more or less fixed there, Black can reduce the activity of the enemy bishop to a minimum.

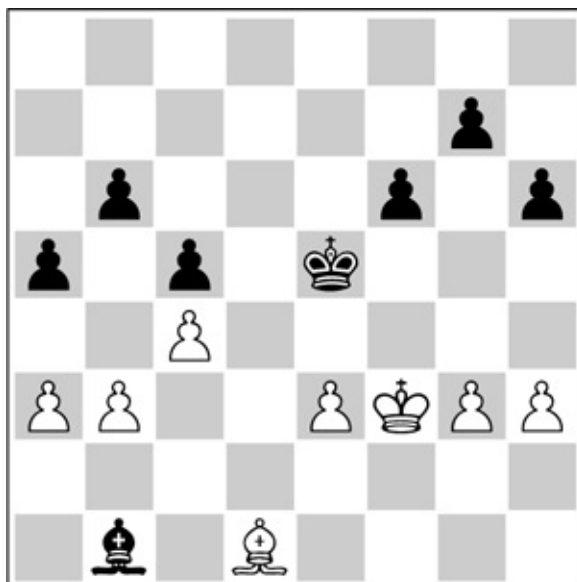
**1...Bb1 2.a3 a5!**

Keres prevents the possibility of 3.b4, forcing White to continue with weak pawns on b3 and c4.

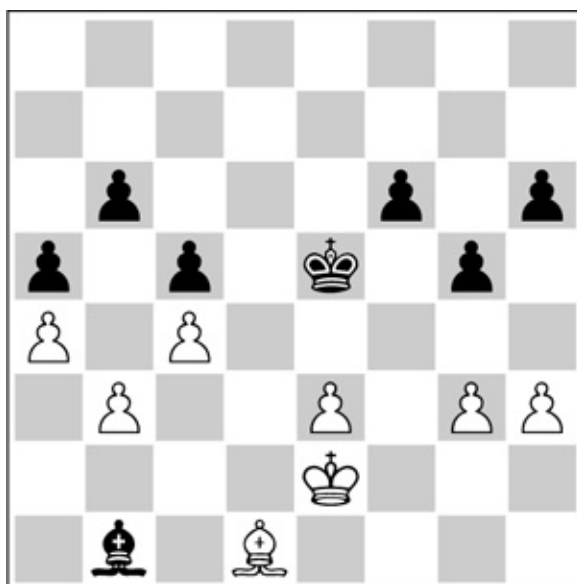
**3.Bd1 Kg6 4.Kg2 Kf5 5.Kf3 Ke5**

The black king has landed on the ideal square, and now Keres can comfortably figure out how to make progress. At this point the game was adjourned, and the interim analysis produced the following standard winning plan:

- Stage 1: Since White does not have any bishop moves that do not lose a pawn, Black can push his kingside pawns unhindered with ...g7-g5 and ...f6-f5.
- Stage 2: At the right moment Black plays ...f5-f4, conquering the square d4 or f4 for his king.
- Stage 3: From one of these squares, the king threatens to invade either on the kingside or on the queenside, so that White cannot avoid material loss in the long run.



**6.a4 g5 7.Ke2?!**



**7...Bf5!**

Keres abandons the winning plan outlined above, because he sees that in these circumstances he can force a quicker win with a different plan.

**8.g4**

Out of dire necessity, White has to put another pawn on the wrong colour. The point of Black's switch was that after 8.h4 Bg4+, the pawn ending would be hopeless for White.

**8...Bb1 9.Kf3 f5 10.gxf5**

If White tries to postpone this swap, he will lose even more quickly: 10.Ke2 f4 11.m fxe3 12.Kxe3 Be4, and White is in zugzwang.

### 10...Kxf5 11.Kf2 Be4

The logical 11...Ke4 does not lead to the desired result, as White just has 12.Bh5. With the text move Black deprives the white king of the square f3, and with ...Kg6 he will prepare the ...h6-h5 push.

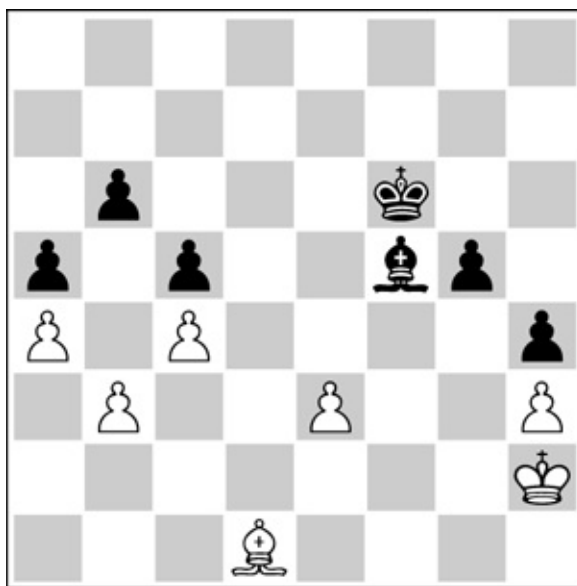
### 12.Kg3 Kg6 13.Kf2

After 13.h4 Keres demonstrates that with 13...h5! 14.Kh3 Bd3 15.Kg3 Bf5!, White would end up in zugzwang again. So he must exchange on g5, after which the h-pawn will easily decide the issue. After the text move, a new weakness is fixed on h3.

### 13...h5 14.Kg3 h4+ 15.Kf2 Bf5 16.Kg2 Kf6

Now that the white king is tied to the new weakness, a king march through the centre will decide the game.

### 17.Kh2



### 17...Ke6! 0-1

A final subtlety. After the forced 18.Kg2 Ke5 19.Kh2, 19...Bb1! wins: 20.Kg2 Ke4 21.Kf2 Kd3, and the black king enters the position decisively.

## 10.3 When are pawn islands useful?

A more aggressively inclined player who has studied the above examples carefully, just might sit down behind the board in anguish now. Should he watch his pawn structure extremely carefully and forget about his usual keen eye for piece play and mating attacks? Is it time to put his offensive aspirations on hold as soon as he has sinned against the strategic laws, albeit ever so slightly?

Fortunately, no. This section also contains good news for the attacking player. The player with the greater number of pawn islands must search for active piece

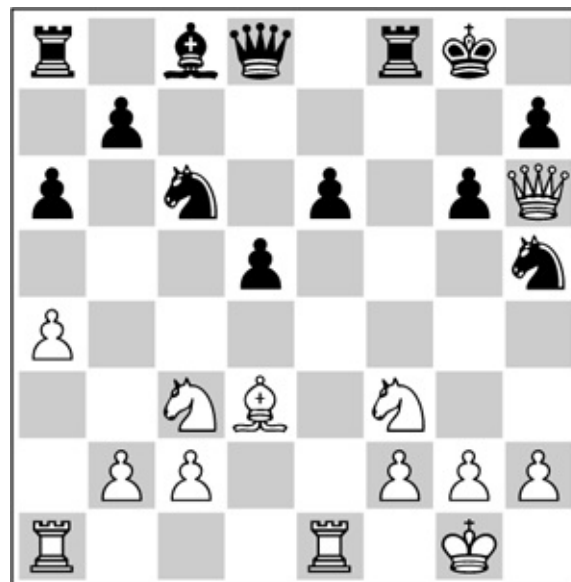
play in order to compensate for his positional defects. He should strive to keep as many pieces on the board as possible. He should never forget that piece activity counts above all. A healthy pawn structure does not bring universal happiness; not if you are faced with a dangerous attack. In the pawn formation of the schematic diagram (on page 147) we can not only point at drawbacks for the player with the most pawn islands. This pawn formation also harbours chances for him. If we assume that White has castled, the f-file will give him attacking chances in certain situations.

The trick in the following diagram will appeal to these ‘former’ tacticians.

□ **Shabalov,Alexander**

■ **Vitolins,Alvis**

Jurmala 1985 (9)



Optically speaking, things have gotten a little out of hand for Black. He is weak on the dark squares in the centre, he has three pawn islands and his pieces do not cooperate. But one factor works in his favour: the f-file!

**1...Rxf3!?**

Good or bad, the second player hardly had a choice. The white king position is now irreparably damaged and especially the black knight will suddenly find a beautiful square. The sacrifice has reduced White's central control and diminished his chances for a blockade.

**2.gxf3 Nd4 3.Re3 Bd7**



#### 4.Kh1?

The sudden role reversal causes White to collapse. He should have exchanged the strongly placed knight with 4.Ne2, although after 4...Nxe2+ 5.Bxe2 Qf6 6.c3 Nf4 Black also has (more than) enough compensation for the sacrificed exchange. The king move is based on a miscalculation.

#### 4...Qh4 5.Kg1

Bitter necessity, as the threat of 5...Ng3+ cannot be parried any other way.

#### 5...Rf8 6.Ne2 Nxf3+ 7.Rxf3

White is already compelled to return the material, but still he cannot stop the black attack.

#### 7...Rxf3 8.Ng3



### 8...Rxf2!?

Black is doing good business along the f-file in this game. The white king is smoked out. Presumably even stronger was 8...Qg4 9.Qd2 Nf4 10.Bf1 Bc6, and dark clouds are gathering over the king's head.

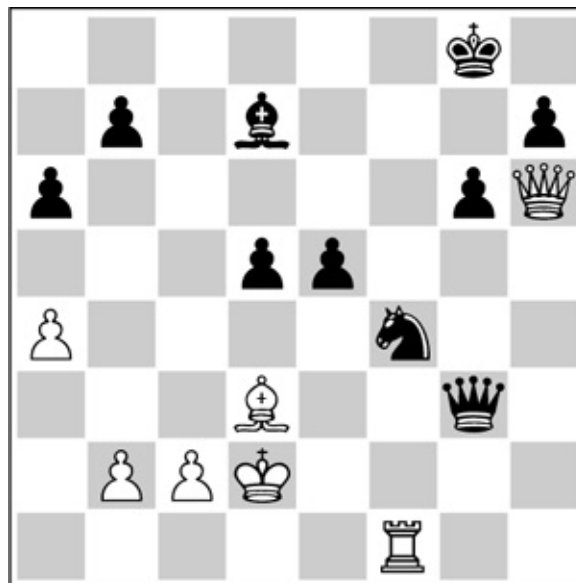
### 9.Kxf2 Qxh2+ 10.Ke3 Qxg3+ 11.Kd2 e5

Besides the fact that Black isn't badly off materially, he can merrily carry on with his initiative.

### 12.RH?!

Here 12.Qe3 was much more persistent, although Black also keeps excellent winning chances after 12...Qxe3+ 13.Kxe3 Nf4. 12...Nf4

### 12...Nf4



### 13.Rh1?

But after this new mistake, salvation is no longer possible.

### 13...Bh3!14.Kc1 e4

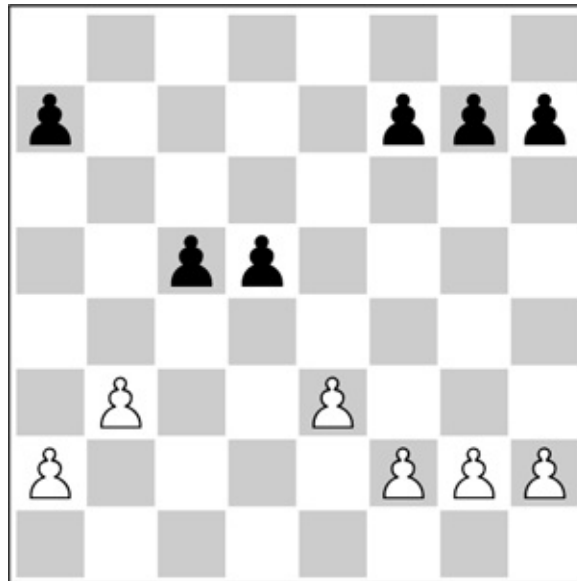
The rest speaks for itself

### 15.Bxe4 dxe4 16.Rd1 Ne6 17.Kb1 Nf8 18.Rd8 Qe1+ 19.Ka2 Be6+ 20.b3 Qf2 21.Rd2 Qf3 22.Qg5 Qc3 23.Re2 Bf5 24.Kb1 h5 25.Rg2 Qf3 26.Rg3 Ne6 0-1

Let us return to the problems around the pawn islands theory.

In the previous game we saw the black player making optimal use of the open f-file. Although in a theoretical sense he was saddled with a structural defect, nonetheless he was able to develop maximum activity for his pieces. And herein lies the secret for the player who is confronted with a greater number of pawn islands. He must rely on piece play, on breakthroughs in the centre and on the open files that are available to him.

A frequently-seen pawn formation is the one presented schematically in the following diagram.



A player with an adventurous nature can smilingly allow hanging pawns. There are opening systems known in theory, for instance in popular openings such as the Queen's Indian, where these hanging pawns are regular guests, and black players obtain good scores with them. And even though we now know that the player who has more pawn islands should do everything he can to keep as many pieces on the board as possible, he should never despair if the opponent does manage to swap a number of pieces. For his chances against the enemy king will always be lurking in the background. The following fragment, between two sworn arch-rivals, illustrates this theme beautifully.

TD 5.2 (D02)

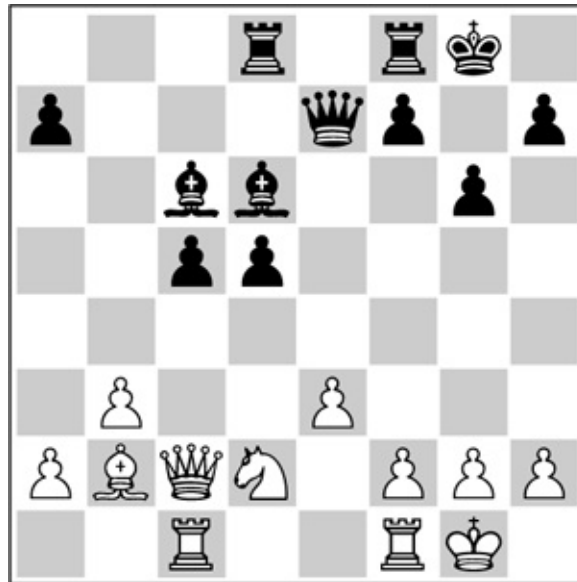
□ **Nimzowitsch, Aaron**

■ **Tarrasch, Siegbert**

St Petersburg prel 1914 (5)

**1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c5 3.c4 e6 4.e3 Nf6 5.Bd3 Nc6 6.0-0 Bd6 7.b3 0-0 8.Bb2 b6  
9.Nbd2 Bb7 10.Rc1 Qe7 11.cxd5 exd5 12.Nh4 g6 13.Nhf3 Rad8 14.dxc5 bxc5  
15.Bb5 Ne4 16.Bxc6 Bxc6 17.Qc2 Nxd2 18.Nxd2**





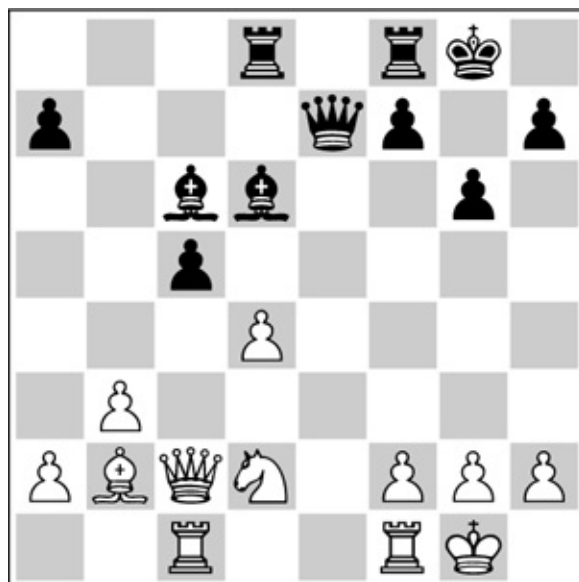
Superficially, White seems to be doing fine. He has already managed to exchange two minor pieces, and now he can prepare to manoeuvre against Black's potential weaknesses. For instance, he has the positional threat of 19.b4. Besides, he is dreaming of mates on the long diagonal. But he is in for a rude awakening.

### **18...d4!**

Here we see that the dynamic factors in the position can sometimes completely neutralize the static disadvantages. Black does not bother about his potential weaknesses, but brutally opens up the position so as to commit a heavy assault on the white king.

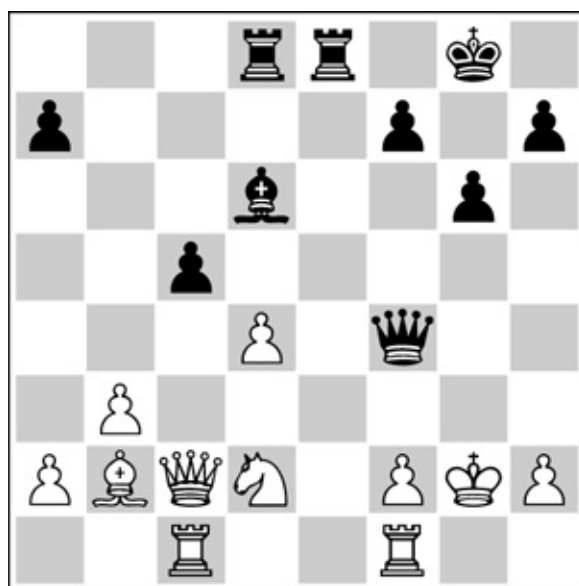
### **19.exd4**

Perhaps 19.e4 was the appropriate move. The critical moment of the game has arrived. With the following double bishop sacrifice, Tarrasch follows in the footsteps of Emanuel Lasker, who made the same sacrifices in his famous game against Bauer, Amsterdam 1889.



### 19...Bxh2+

Tarrasch does not beat about the bush. With a piece sacrifice he forces a passage to the white king. A closer look reveals that the other bishop sacrifice 19...Bxg2! would have been even stronger: after 20.Kxg2 Qg5+ 21.Kb1 Qf4 White is forced to return his piece to avoid immediate mate: 22.Nf3, and after 22...Qxf3+ 23.Kg1 cxd4 his position is obviously hopeless. But after 22.Kg2, Black had to have foreseen the brilliant 22...Rfe8!.



### Analysis diagram

The rook, among others, takes away the most important escape squares from the white king, and so the threat of ...Qxh2+ followed by ...Qh3 mate is on the

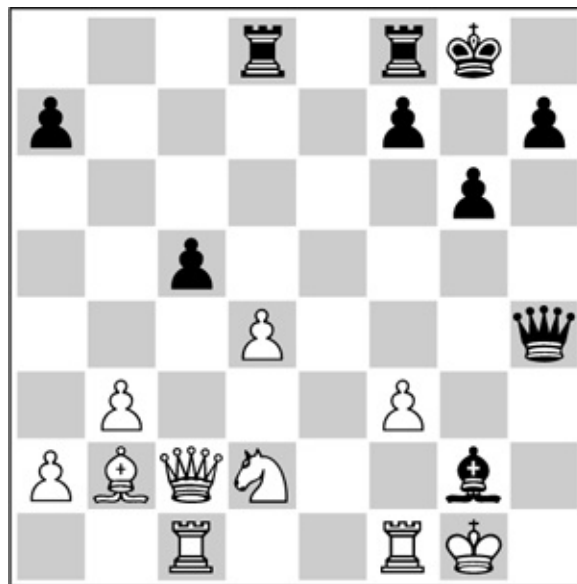
cards. There is no decent defence available, for example: 23.Rh1 Re2, and now 24.Rcf1 is met by the ever-artistic epaulette mate 24...Qg4.

**20.Kxh2 Qh4+ 21.Kg1 Bxg2!**

Attacking players will really enjoy this game. Weak pawn islands do not matter at all. It's the enemy king that's at stake here!

**22.f3**

White cannot afford to accept the second bishop sacrifice. After 22.Kxg2 Qg4+ 23.Kh2 Rd5, the mate can only be averted at great material loss: 24.Qxc5 Rh5+! 25.Qxh5 Qxh5+ 26.Kg2 Qg5+, and the knight on d2 will also leave the board.



**22...Rfe8!?**

According to Tarrasch Black could also have opted for 22...Bxf1, but he prefers to go on attacking.

**23.Ne4?**

Objectively, 23.Bie1 was the only move to continue the struggle. After 23... Rxe1+ 24.Rxe1 Qxe1+ 25.Kxg2 Qe2+ 26.Kg3 cxd4, Black keeps a clear advantage, but he would still need to prove something. After the text move it's a piece of cake for Black.

**23...Qh1+ 24.Kf2 Bxf1 25.d5 f5 26.Qc3**

White was dreaming of this diagonal once.

But his dreams were rudely shattered.

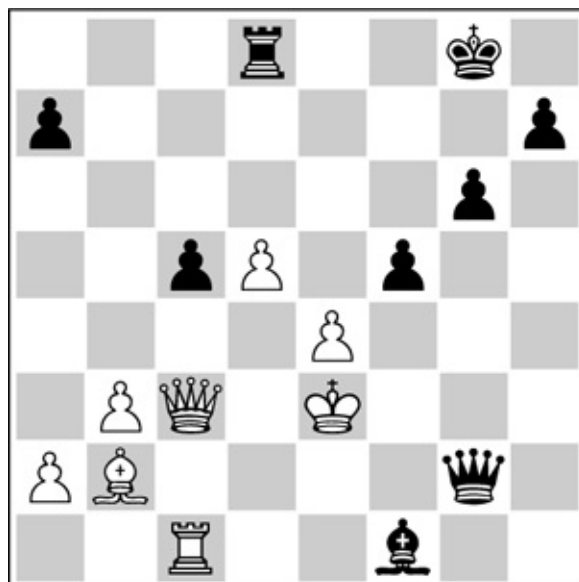
**26...Qg2+ 27.Ke3**

Now Black finishes the job elegantly.

**27...Rxe4+**

A nice final combination, leading to a forced mate.

**28.fxe4**



### 28.fxe4

It would have been mate in three after 28...Qg3+ 29.Kd2 Qf2+ 30.Kd1 Qe2#, but the way Tarrasch concludes this game is not bad either.

**29.Kxf4 Rf8+ 30.Ke6 Qh2+ 31.Ke6 Re8+ 32.Kd7 Bb5# 0-1**

‘Hanging pawns’ do not always result in mating attacks. However, to deal with all the problems connected with this theme would lead us outside the scope of this book. There are more ideas that can be conceived for a player with hanging pawns. We have said before that this player has more space at his disposal to put his pieces in good positions, and often he gets the chance to convert one of his central pawns into a passed pawn. This is an interesting given, which can lead to paradoxical phenomena.

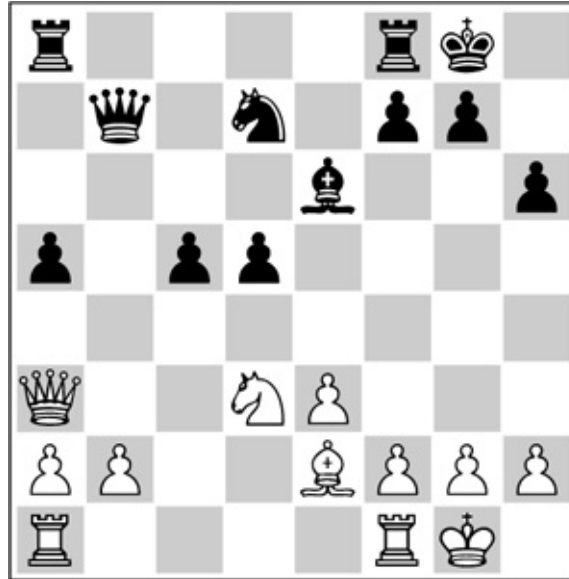
In principle, the player who has to play against the hanging pawns, strives to exchange all the minor pieces. With major pieces he can generally exert firm pressure on the enemy position. But supposing he actually manages to realize this general exchange, and suddenly the hanging pawns are converted to a passed pawn? In the chapter on the passed pawn we have learned that in principle, the player who has the passed pawn wants to keep the major pieces on the board! See the game Petrosian-Kortchnoi, Il Ciocco 1977 (page 91 ). In short: hanging pawns can lead to an interesting, ambiguous battle.

Another plan which the player with the hanging pawns can follow, is to make use of open files. Former World Champion Bobby Fischer shows how.

□ Bertok, Mario

■ Fischer, Robert

Stockholm izt 1962 (22)



A characteristic position. White has already managed to exchange two pieces and prepares to put the question to the hanging pawns. Superficially, it looks as if his chances should be rated more highly, but it is clear that the manoeuvres with the white knight have been a little slow. The white player does not have the slightest clue what he is in for in this position.

**1...c4!**

A remarkable decision. Black puts his pawns on the wrong colour (that of his bishop) and voluntarily gives up the beautiful central square d4. In other, similar cases, we would immediately condemn such a pawn move, but here it is justified. With active piece play along the open b-file, combined with the far advanced c-pawn, Fischer succeeds in amply compensating for the positional disadvantages in his position. Due to, among others, the pressure along the b-file, the white pieces will be wrong-footed shortly.

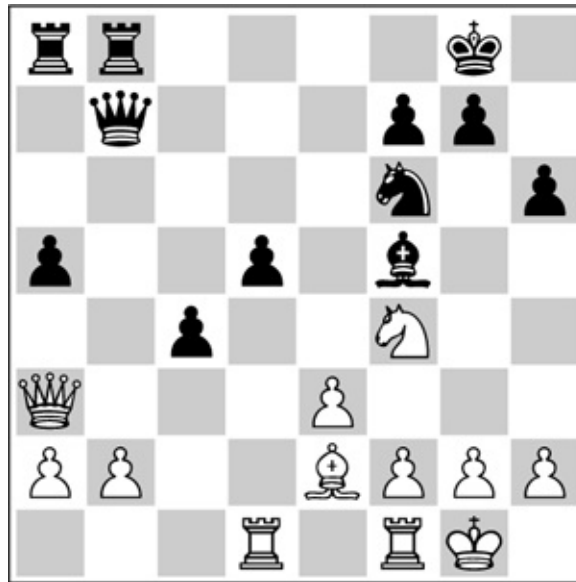
**2.Nf4 Rfb8 3.Rab1?**

A critical moment. After the text move White will soon end up in a lost position. Better is 3.Nxe6 fxe6 4.Bg4 Ra6! 5.b3! (5.Qe7? Nf8; 5.Rab1 Qb4 6.Qc3 Qxc3 7.bxc3 Rab6) 5...cxb3 6.axb3 Qxb3 7.Qe7 Nf8 8.Ra3 Qb4 with a small edge for Black, as Fischer himself has indicated. This advantage is very marginal, though, as after 9.Qxb4 Rxb4 10.Be2 Ra7 11.Ria1 a4 12.Bd1, the position is completely dead.

Another idea is to make an attempt at activity with 3.e4. After 3...Qxb2 4.Qxb2

Rxb2 5.exd5 Bxd5 6.Rfe1 Re8, however, White has too little compensation for the pawn.

**3...Bf5!4.Rbd1 Nf6**



## 5.Rd2

Fischer indicates that 5.Bf3 would not be a solution to the problem in this position. After 5...Qxb2 6.Qxb2 Rxb2 7.Nxd5 Nxd5 8.Bxd5 (in case of 8.Rxd5 Be6 9.Rc5 Rc8! 10.Rxa5 c3 11.Rc1 c2, the black c-pawn is too strong.

A pretty line is: 12.Be4 Rb1! 13.Rxb1 cxb1Q+ 14.Bxb1 Rc1#) 8...Rc8 9.e4 Be6! 10.Bxe6 fxe6 11.a4 c3, and the black passed pawn decides. In the diagram position White is ready for 6.Bf3, followed by a possible Nf4-e2-d4, after which he will hold all the positional trumps. Black must be quick, and with his next move he puts a spoke in his opponent 's wheel.

## 5...g5!

A strong move.

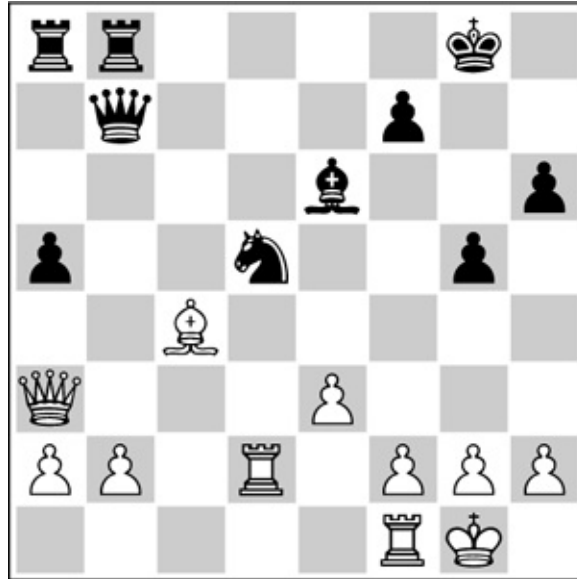
## 6.Nxd5

This blunders a piece. Necessary was 6.Nh5 Ne4 7.Rc2 Qb4!, maximizing Black's pressure on the queenside. Not 7...Nxf2? in view of 8.Qc3!, and White wins.

## 6...Nxd5 7.Bxc4

7.Bf3? is met by 7...Bd3.

## 7...Be6



### 8.Rfd1?

This hastens the end. Better was 8.Bxd5 Bxd5 9.f3, but the pawns do not nearly balance the piece. Now it looks as if White can develop counterchances with 9.Qd6, but Black can keep taking pawns unpunished with 9...Bxg2, as after 10.Qxh6 he wins easily with 10...Ra6! 11.Qxg5+ Rg6.

### 8...Nxe3! 9.Qxe3

Even worse is 9.Bxe6 Qxg2#.

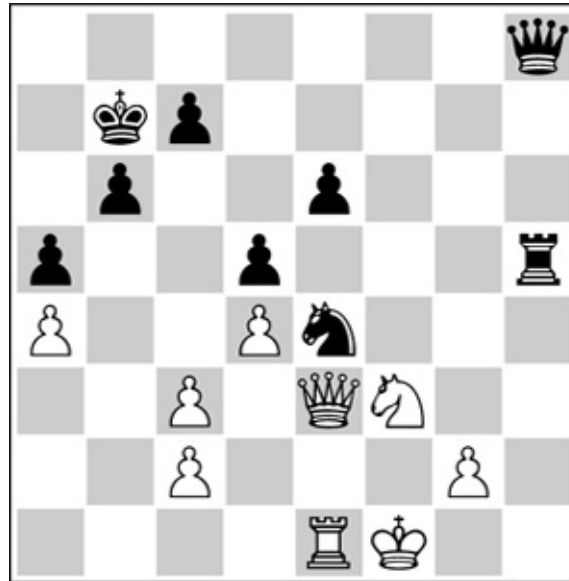
9...Bxc4 10.h4 Re8 11.Qg3 Qe7 12.b3 Be6 13.f4 g4 14.h5 Qc5+15.Rf2 Bf5 0-1

### Conclusion:

In general the player with the greater number of pawn islands should place his bets on the middlegame. If pieces are exchanged, his attacking chances will be reduced and the weaknesses in his pawn formation will make themselves felt.

## Exercises

## 10.1



On the basis of the ‘pawn islands rule’, we can claim that in the diagram position Black has the better prospects. Can you indicate – analogously to the example we have discussed in the text – which strategy he should pursue in order to confront White with the defects in his position? With which move would you start?

### Solution



10.2



Black has three pawn islands in the end- game against two for White, and therefore the latter is better. The question is: how should he convert this positional advantage into something more concrete?

[Solution](#)

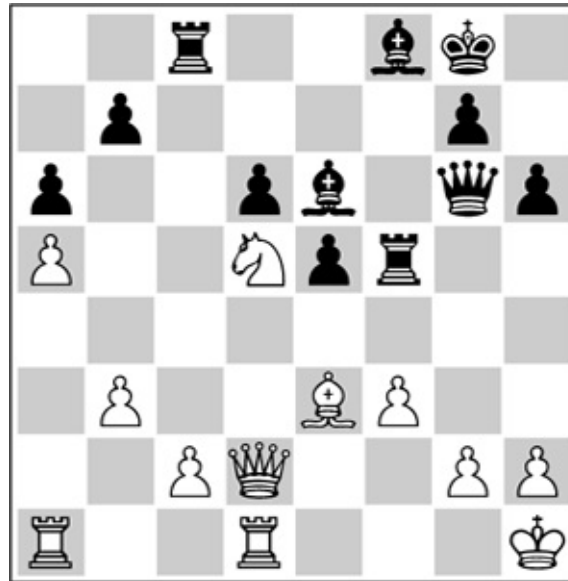
10.3



At first sight Black appears to have the position well under control. However, White proves that the defects in the black pawn formation are more serious than would appear superficially. With which manoeuvre does he push Black against the wall?

[Solution](#)

10.4



White has fewer pawn islands and he has also managed a blockade of the black centre pawns already. If we add that the black bishop pair cannot become active, the victory should be merely a matter of time. Is there no possibility at all for Black to fight back? Choose from:

- A) 1...Rh5
- B) 1...Rxf3
- C) 1...Rc5.

[Solution](#)

# Chapter 11

## The pawn centre

### 11.1 Introduction

Soon after learning the chess rules, we discover that the centre plays an important role in a chess game. In principle, the centre is where the pieces develop the greatest activity. The influence the pieces have in the enemy ranks also plays an important role.

We are going to try and increase this understanding with a little experiment. Put a queen on e1 on an empty board. If we define the sixth, seventh and eighth rank as the ‘enemy regions’, the queen on e1 controls three squares in that area. If we now play Qe1-e5, we see that the number of squares has been tripled with one blow. In this chapter, another aspect of play in the centre is put forward: the power of a pawn pair in the middle of the board. Particularly when the pawns march forward in groups (i.e., next to each other), they are sometimes capable of leaving behind a trail of destruction.

Since a pawn has the least value – and is therefore the least vulnerable –, it can successfully drive away enemy pieces. We can view connected pawns in the centre as a kind of army unit that marches on irresistibly if no obstacles are thrown in its path.

□ **Grooten,Herman**

■ **Tisdall,Jonathan**

Manchester 1982 (7)

It is clear that White has fantastic compensation for the sacrificed pawn. After



**1.e6!**

the black player called it a day. White's final move leaves him no hope, as after 1...fxe6 2.Bxe6, heavy material losses cannot be avoided.

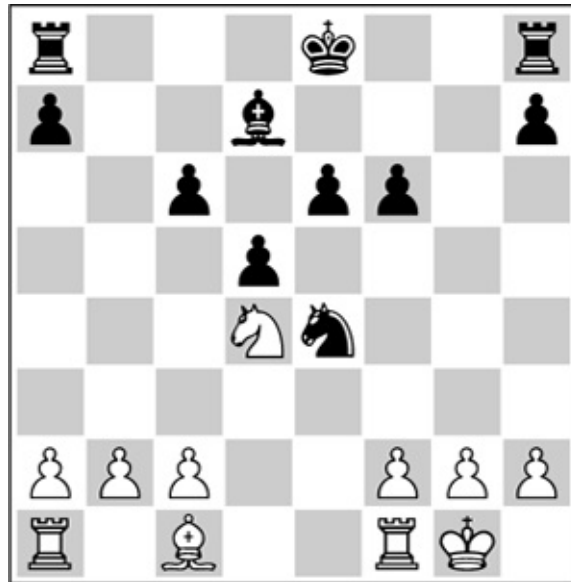
I remember that Tisdall, who always had a much higher Elo rating than I had, was flabbergasted. I have rarely met such a sporting opponent: despite this crushing defeat he was still prepared to analyse extensively and in a friendly tone. Much later I discovered that he had become a respected trainer who has published a very nice book: *Improve your Chess Now*.

A pawn pair in the centre is strong if the pawns can be pushed forward side by side. In such cases we speak of a 'mobile pawn centre'. The opposing side will have to try and put a stop to this pawn pair by blocking it, or slow it down in some other way. Before we discuss this defensive strategy, we will first study how the enemy can be trampled underfoot by a central pawn pair. The following fragment beautifully illustrates the power of such a tandem.

□ **Bogoljubow, Efim**

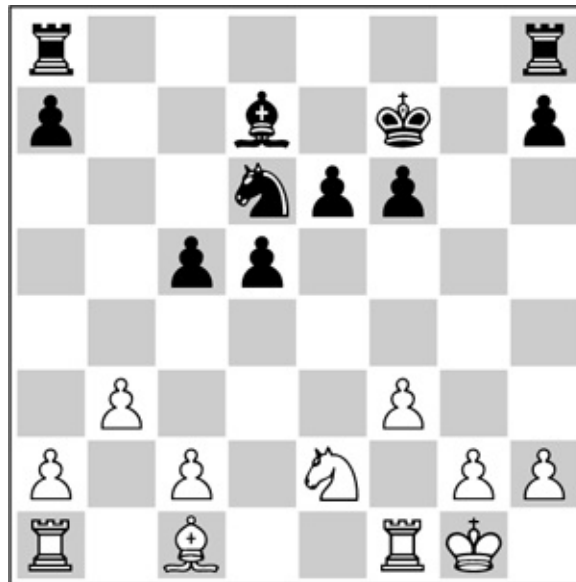
■ **Réti, Richard**

Mährisch-Ostrau 1923 (3)



Black has two pawns in the centre, whereas White doesn't have a single one. Since White is not able to block this mobile centre, the black pawns roll on unhindered.

**1...c5 2.Ne2 Kf7 3.f3?! Nd6 4.b3?!**



A very unfortunate move in combination with his previous one. With the pawn move f2-f3 White has relinquished the e3-square, and this last move gives Black an important target with actions like ...c5-c4, with which Black threatens to open the c-file for his rooks.

**4...e5 5.Ba3 Rac8 6.Rad1 d4 7.Nc1**

7.f4 is simply met by 7...Kg7.

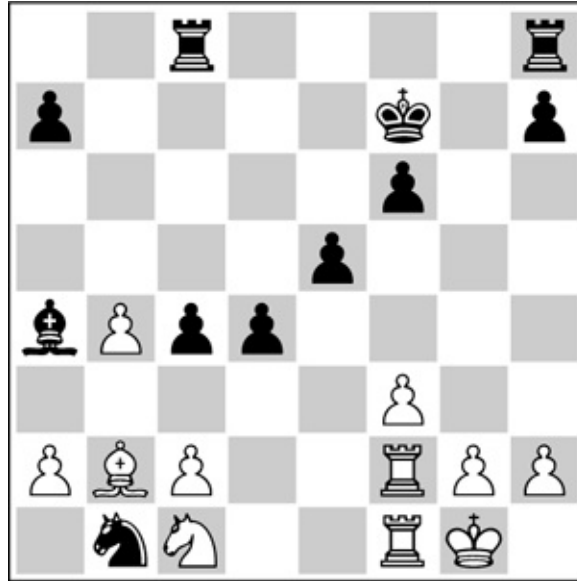
**7...Nf5**

The knight jumps into the hole.

**8.Rf2 Ne3 9.Re1 c4 10.b4**

The white pieces are completely helpless. Against Black's superior pawn centre he has no answer.

**10...Ba4 11.Ree2 Nd1 12.RH Nc3 13.Ref2 Nb1 14.Bb2**



**14...c3**

And Black cashed in the point on move 42.

It is clear that the opposite side must take measures to attack a central pawn mass in good time. What measures these are, and how he can operate successfully against a pawn centre, we will see in 11.3. But first we will discuss the advantages of a strong pawn centre, and how these can be put into good use.

### **11.2 When is a pawn centre strong?**

Especially in cases where the opponent is not able to attack the centre, he will be forced to sit and watch how the attacker exploits his advantage. We distinguish three specific cases:

#### **A) Mobile pawn centre**

Usual consequence: attack on the king.

#### **B) Static pawn centre**

Usual consequence: attack on the flank.

#### **C) Restricted pawn centre**

Usual consequence: play elsewhere on the board.

#### **A) Mobile pawn centre**

We have said before that according to Nimzowitsch, pawns possess an intrinsic 'lust to expand'. If central pawns are mobile, their collective march can quickly decide a game. Pawns are capable of driving enemy pieces from their defensive positions. Furthermore, in a number of cases – with a little help – they can break open a king position. This often leads to the emergence of tactical motifs.

□ **Petrosian, Tigran**

■ **Pfeiffer, Gerhard**

Leipzig ol 1960 (7)



In this position, White has a little more space for his pieces, as well as a slight lead in development, since Black has not yet castled. If White doesn't act quickly, he will soon be confronted with the weakness of his pawn on c4.

**18.Nd5!**

A magnificent knight sacrifice, for which the compensation is based on the mobile pawn duo in the centre that will soon be formed.

**18...exd5 19.cxd5 Qc8 20.e6**

Opening the long diagonal, which increases the power of the bishop on b2.

**20...0-0 21.Qc3f6**

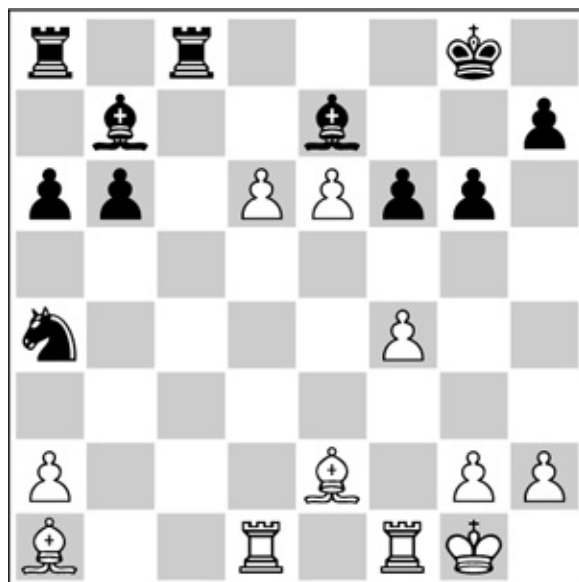
Black is forced to play this move, but after this he cannot prevent White from getting his two centre pawns on the sixth rank.

**22.d6 Na4!**

For now, Black is defending excellently. After 22...Qd8 23.Bc4!, he would have been much worse off

**23.Qxc8 Rfxc8 24.Ba1**





### 24...Rc2?

But now Black does cave in. The rook should not leave the back rank, but Black has put his trust in this variation, as he thinks he has a great defence.

After 24...Bf8, with 25.Bxf6, White would keep all options open for the further advancement of the pawns.

### 25.dxe7 Rxe2 26.Rd8+ Kg7 27.Rc1!

Petrosian is not to be fooled. White certainly should not promote with 27.e8Q on account of 27...Rxc2+ 28.Kb1 Rg3+, and Black gives mate.

### 27...Rxe6

It looks as if Black has everything under control; the square e8 is indirectly protected now.

### 28.Rc7!

Apparently the German had missed this move! White now threatens to queen with discovered check.

### 28...Kh6 29.Bxf6!

White continues to play very strongly. The move 29.Rxb7 was also far from bad, although then he would have had to calculate 29...Rxe7. After 30.Rxe7 Rxd8 31.Bxf6 Rd5! 32.g4, the black king is also caught in a kind of mating net.

### 29...Be4 30.Bg5+

Black resigned, as after 30.Bg5+ Kh5 31.e8QRxe8 32.h3!! h6 33.g4#, it is really mate!

## B) Static pawn centre

With a static centre we mean a central formation that is stable. This means that it cannot be attacked by the opponent in the short term. We are not necessarily

talking about a fixed pawn centre, as occurs in some variations of the French or the King's Indian Defence. We may also think of the building of a 'concrete block', as occurs in the London System (1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Bf4d5 4.e3 c5 5.c3).

If the opponent has castled, we would like to start an attack on his king. Setting up such an attack can be done either with pieces or with pawns. Generally, the intention of a pawn march on the flank is to tear down the enemy king's position. Once a breach has been made, the attacker's own pieces are ready to intervene. However, such a flank attack with pawns is not without risk. The rule of thumb is that we can only start such an action on the flank if the centre is stable. If that is not the case, then the opponent's natural reaction to a flank attack is to strike back in the centre. If the centre is opened, the flank attack may turn out to have an entirely contrary effect. The space that has been abandoned behind the pawns on the flank can often be excellently exploited by the opponent.

We give an example of a central action as a reaction to a (rather unfounded) flank attack.

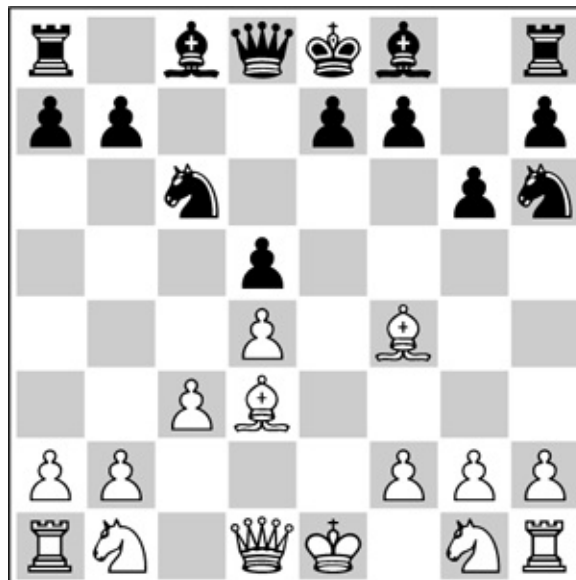
CK 2.10 (B13)

□ **Kroeze, Frank**

■ **Grooten, Herman**

Enschede 1993 (S)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 g6 6.Bf4 Nh6



7.h4?!

An early flank attack, which Black counters with a powerful action in the centre.

**7...f6!? 8.Bxh6?!**

This is a curious exchange, but its motivation is that White wants to exploit the fact that Black's pieces are standing on the rim.

**8...Bxh6 9.h5 Kf7!**

Oddly enough, the king is perfectly fine here!

**10.Qc2 Kg7 11.Nd2**

White could not go for 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.Bxg6 on account of 12...Bd2+ 13.Nxd2 Rxh1.

**11...e5**

Black does not beat about the bush; the time is already ripe to push the central pawns forward!

**12.dxe5?!**

The consequences of this move are already well nigh disastrous, as now Black's pawn centre will already become mobile.

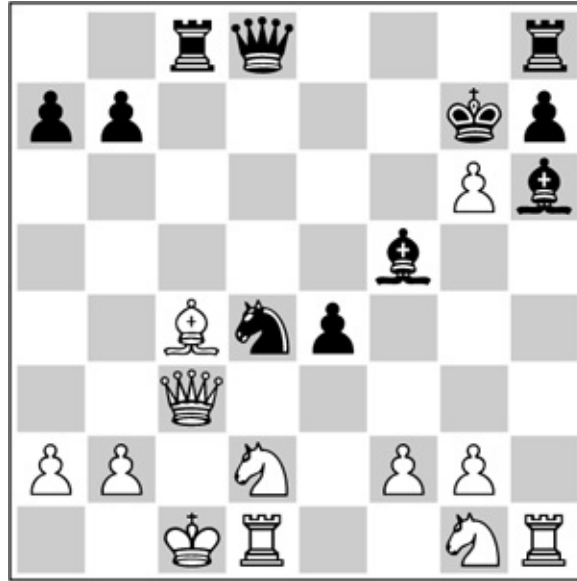
**12...fxe5 13.0-0-0 e4 14.Be2**



**14...d4!15.cxd4**

It is not so simple for Black to find the right answer to 15.Qxe4. After the game we found that 15...Bf5 was the best move. After 16.Qf3, the best for Black is to mobilize the rest of his troops: 16...Qc7! 17.hxg6 hxg6 and now, for instance, 18.Nh3 fails to 18...Nb4, and the mate can hardly be parried.

**15...Nxd4 16.Qc3 Bf5 17.hxg6 Rc8 18.Bc4**



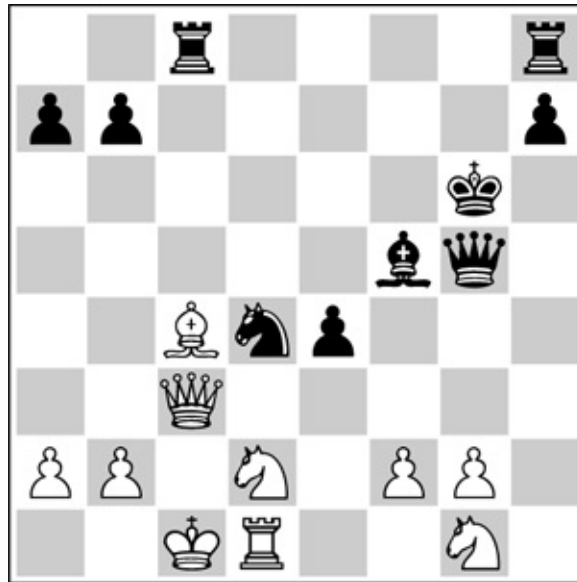
### 18...Bg5?!

The black player thought that the activity he was exercising along the c1-h6 diagonal was of greater importance than winning a piece with 18...b5. For a while it looked as if White could have resisted with 19.Rxh6 Kxh6 20.Qe3+, but this turns out to be an illusion: 20...Qg5! ends all resistance, since 21.Qxd4 is not possible in view of 21...Rxc4+. In short: Black could have simply collected a piece.

### 19.Rh5?!

After this new inaccuracy, things go rapidly downhill for the white player. But also after 19.Ne2 Rxc4! 20.Qxc4 Nxe2+ there was little hope of salvation: 21.Qxe2 Qc7+ 22.Kb1 e3+, and with two pieces for a rook Black will probably be able to cash in the point.

**19...Kxg6 20.Rxg5+ Qxg5**



## 21.g4

The white player could also have resigned, as there is no salvation. For example, 21.Qxd4 does not work in view of 21...Rxc4+ 22.Qxc4 Rc8. Neither does 21.Kb1 e3+ 22.Ka1 Nc2+ or 21.Nh3 Ne2+ 22.Kc2 e3+ 23.Kb3 Nxc3 24.Nxg5 Nxd1 offer any solace.

**21...Bxg4 22.Kb1 Bxd1 23.Qxd4 Rhd8 24.Qxe4+ Qf5**

**0-1**

In the above we have seen the possible consequences of a central position that is broken up during a flank attack. In the following example, White does adhere to the above-mentioned strategy, i.e., of first securing the centre.

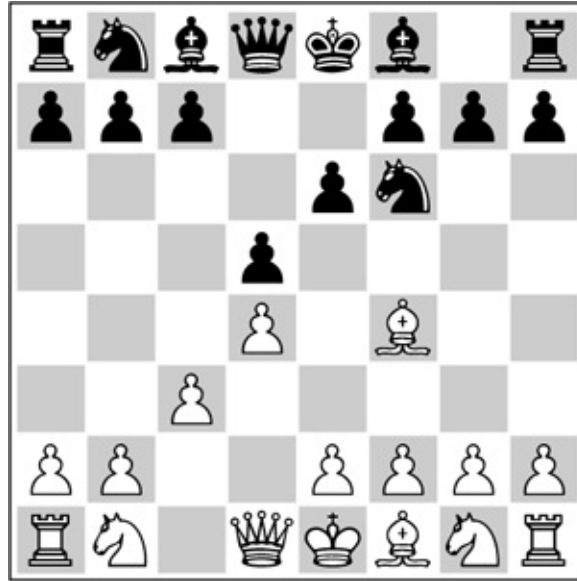
VO 22.1 (A40)

□ **Eönig,Imre**

■ **Weiss,Max**

Vienna 1919

**1.d4 e6 2.c3d5 3.Bf4 Nf6**



#### 4.63

From the beginning, White builds a strong pawn centre. Since it is not easy for Black to undertake anything against such a solid set-up, the latter is sometimes compared with ‘pouring concrete’. The sympathetic Dutch IM with the appropriate name Jan van de Mortel (Dutch for ‘mortar’), who now lives in the United States, is known to favour this set-up with white.

#### 4...c5 5.Bd3 Nc6 6.Nd2 Be7

A little passive, and this move does not undertake anything against the influence that White will shortly exercise on the centre. 6...Bd6 was to be preferred.

#### 7.Ngf3

Many players first play 7.h3 here, so as to keep the f4 bishop on the board.

#### 7...0-0

7...Nh5 deserved attention.

#### 8.Ne5!

White waits with castling, as he has other plans!



### 8...Re8

Once again, Black gives his opponent free hand in the centre. He should have played 8...cxd4, with the possible continuation 9.exd4 Nxe5 10.dxe5 Nd7 11.Qh5 f5!, and for the time being Black has little to fear. 12.g4 can be met by 12...Nc5 13.Bc2 Ne4, and if White plays 12.f3 first, then 12...Qc7 is the right answer.

After the text move, White rules supreme in the centre and he can operate on the flank without any risk. With his following move, he starts throwing his weight around and introduces an attack.

### 9.g4

According to the Yugoslav theoretician Vukovic the text move is the introduction to the so-called 'bayonet attack'.

### 9...Nxe5 10.dxe5 Nd7



### 11.g5

Now 11...Bxg5 is met by 12.Qh5 h6 13.Rg1 Bxf4 14.exf4, when White can make excellent use of the open g-file. The more or less forced 14...Kf8 is met by 15.Qg4 g6 16.Bxg6!, after which the white attack is decisive.

It would have become clear how great Black's problems already are if he had gone 11...Qc7?. The intention is to attack the pawn on e5, but this queen move turns out to be highly unfortunate after 12.Bxh7+! Kxh7 13.Qh5+ Kg8 14.g6! fxg6 15.Qxg6, and the black rook is unprotected: 15...Rd8 (15...Rf8 does not help either after 16.Qxe6+ Rf7 17.Qxf7+! Kxf7 18.e6+, followed by 19.Bxc7) 16.Rg1 Bf8, and now White crowns his attack with 17.Qxe6+ followed by 18.Qf7.

### 11...Nf8 12.h4 Bd7 13.Qg4

Slowly the extent of the military force that is being concentrated before the enemy headquarters becomes visible.

### 13...Bc6 14.0-0-0 b5

Black is in dire straits, but of course this action is long overdue.

### 15.h5c4

No question mark – the white attack cannot be stopped anyway.



## 16.Bxh7+!

A standard combination, in an original form. The intention is to dismantle Black's kingside and to open a file.

**16...Nxb7 17.g6 Ng5**

With this move Black thought he could delay the assault, but after the following powerful blow his position collapses.

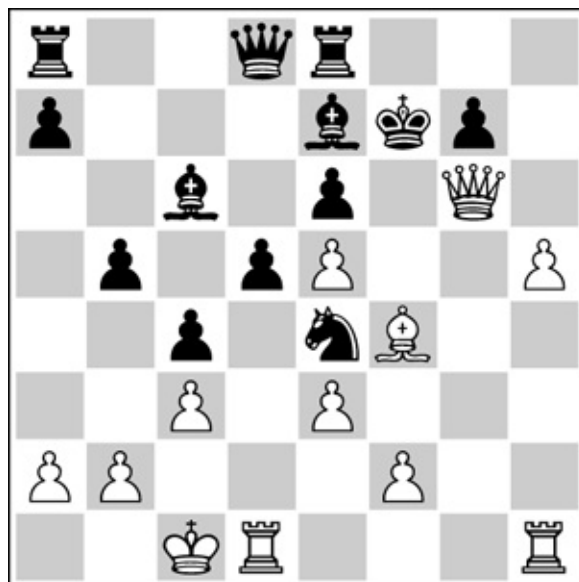
## 18.Ne4!!

An effective pseudo-sacrifice, eliminating an important black defender – the knight.

**18...Nxe4**

Also after a queen sacrifice like 18...dxe4 19.Rxd8 Raxd8 20.Bxg5, Black has nothing to hope for.

**19.gxf7+ Kxf7 20.Qg6+**



**20...Kf8**

After this move, the rest is easy.

In the event of 20...Kg8, the attack would also have gone like clockwork. After 21.h6 Bf8 22.Rdg1 Re7, White would have had to continue with 23.hxg7! (not the attractive but, in this case, mistaken queen sacrifice 23.Qh7+?, which does not have the desired effect: 23...Kxh7 24.hxg7+ Kg8 25.Rh8+ Kf7 26.g8 Q+ Ke8 27.Qxf8+ Kd7, and Black remains a piece up) 23...Bxg7 24.Rh7 Qf8 25.Rgh1, with mate next move.

**21.h6 Bf6 22.hxg7+ Bxg7**

White has invested quite a lot of material to make his way towards the black king, and now he sacrifices even more, in order to round off the attack in style.

**23.Rh8+! Bxh8 24.Bh6+ Ke7 25.Qh7+ 1-0**

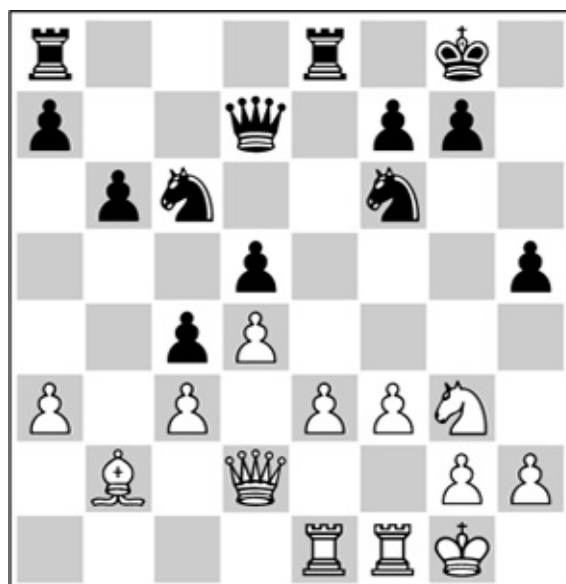
If we possess a strong centre, we can attack to our heart's content. This observation was already made by the old masters. Modern masters often make good use of old wisdom.

One of the greatest attacking artists of recent times is Garry Kasparov. Here is one of his masterpieces.

□ **Kasparov, Garry**

■ **Ivanovic, Bozidar**

Niksic 1983 (6)



With ...c5-c4, Black has given up the pressure on the white centre. His intention is clear. He wants to make the bishop on b2 'bad' and hopes to play for an advantage with his knights in a closed position.

This idea turns out to be based on an enormous error of reasoning. Now that White has a virtually unassailable centre (pawns on c3 and d4), he can undisturbedly set in motion his pawn majority in the centre and on the kingside. Furthermore, the bishop is not at all as bad as it looks at first sight.

### **1.e4!**

The pawn mass in the centre slowly gets rolling.

### **1...g6**

Black is compelled to weaken his king-side, since after 1...dxe4 2.fxe4 h4 3.Nf5 Nxe4 4.Qf4 Qd5 5.Qg4 g6 6.Nh6+ Kg7 7.Rxf7+ Kxh6 8.Be1+!, he is immediately mated by 8...g5 9.Qxh4+ Kg6 10.Qh7+.

### **2.Bc1**

Now that the dark squares on the king-side have been weakened, White, of course, wants his bishop to have its say on that side of the board.

### **2...Nh7**

That the pawn centre is strong and there is quite a lot White can do with it, becomes clear in the following line: 2...Re6 3.e5 Ne8 4.Qh6 b5 5.Bg5 Nd8 6.Bf6 Nxf6 7.exf6 Rxf6 8.Nxh5, and White wins.

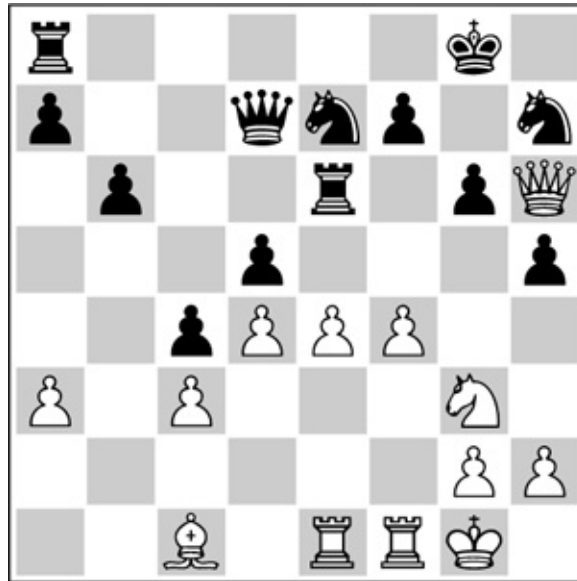
### **3.Qh6 Re6 4.f4**

Since his central c3-d4 formation is so solid, White has his hands free to set his pawn majority on the kingside in motion as well. Black does not have a single possibility to attack the strong pawn centre. As a consequence, Kasparov can lash out on the kingside, where Black is weakened.

Probably 4.exd5 would have been even better. After 4...Qxd5 5.Rxe6 Qxe6 6.f4, followed by f4-f5, the black position is also in ruins.

#### 4...Ne7

Neither would 4...Rae8 have helped Black. After 5.f5 gxf5 6.Qxh5 fxe4 7.Nf5 Kh8 8.Nh6, the white attack is decisive.

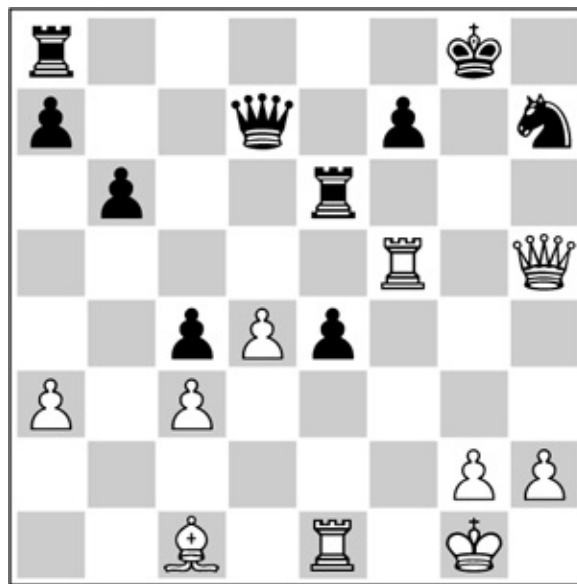


#### 5.f5 gxf5 6.Qxh5dxe4

It is clear that 6...fxe4 fails to 7.Qxf7+.

#### 7.Nxf5 Nxf5 8.Rxf5

Also good was 8.Qxf5 Re7 9.Qxd7 Rxd7 10.Rxe4, and the endgame with a pawn plus should be winning for White.



#### 8...Rae8

According to Kasparov, Black should have defended with 8...f6, but closer investigation shows that he would not have been able to hold either after 9.Re3. After the text move, the pieces can be put back in the box.

### 9.Re3 Rg6

The white player has showed that 9...f6 is no longer a defence here in view of 10.Rd5! Qe7 11.Rg3+ Kh8 12.Bh6 e3 13.Bg7+ (even more powerful is 13.Qg6) 13...Qxg7 14.Rxg7 Kxg7 15.Rd7+ R8e7, as White now has the beautiful cross-pin 16.Qe8!!.

### 10.Rh3

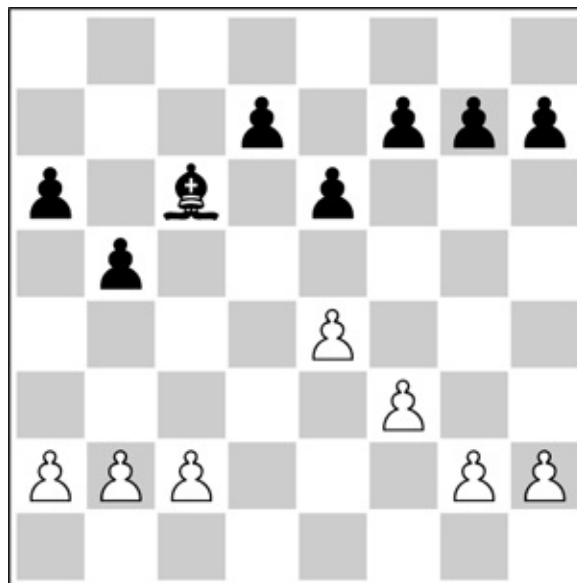
1-0

Since 10...Rg7 is no longer a solution on account of 11.Rg5!, Black resigned.

## C) Restricted pawn centre

We have seen that if the centre position is stable, a player has his hands free to build a pawn storm on the flank. We have taken as a basis positions where the pawn centre has been pushed forward, making an unassailable impression. This leads us to the idea that if the centre pawns are held back, as Richard Réti has demonstrated to us in his flank openings, we might also speak of a stable situation in the centre.

This turns out to be not such a crazy thought, since, for instance, in a variation of the Sicilian Defence which is known as the Taimanov Defence, we see a pawn formation that we could depict schematically as follows:



In this context, a flank attack can be a well-motivated action.

Whereas Réti was one of the so-called 'Hypermoderns' in his day, the chess scene of the late 20th century also had its exponent of eccentric views on the treatment of the opening: the Englishman Michael Basman.

Of Réti we know that he developed his pieces first; he fianchettoed his bishops (i.e., he placed them on the long diagonals) and kept his centre pawns back as long as possible.

In his time, the British player Basman played a kind of futuristic chess, where nothing was too crazy. He had no scruples about leaving the entire centre in the hands of his opponent 'for free'. It is hardly conceivable, but on 1.e4 he thought 1...g5 was a playable reply, just like, for example, 1...a6. Basman managed to justify these seemingly suspect opening choices in many of his games.

Everything was aimed at undermining the opponent's play.

Basman manoeuvred against the enemy centre from two flanks, and tried to sabotage it. In many of his games he kept his centre pawns in their original positions and pointed his bishops, and also other pieces, at the centre. If the opposing side pushed his pawns forward too quickly, Basman's pieces would find good squares. I have selected an example of such an eccentric set-up, on the basis of the 'Taimanov centre' (in this case with reversed colours).

□ **Basman, Michael**

■ **Thipsay, Bagyashree Sathe**

Eastbourne ch-GBR 1991 (7)



**1.g4!?**

A well-motivated action, since White's central position is very solid.

**1...dxc4?**

This cannot be the solution. Black unnecessarily surrenders her influence in the centre, giving the white pieces free rein.

**2.Bxc4 Nb6 3.Be2**



**3...Bf8?!**

This is much too passive.

**4.g5 Nfd7**

And this makes things worse. 4...Nfd5 was the least of evils.

**5.h4**

White merrily pushes his pawns, and since his bishops are working from a distance and are not hampered by their own pawns (see also Chapter 12), he can quickly build up a dangerous attack.

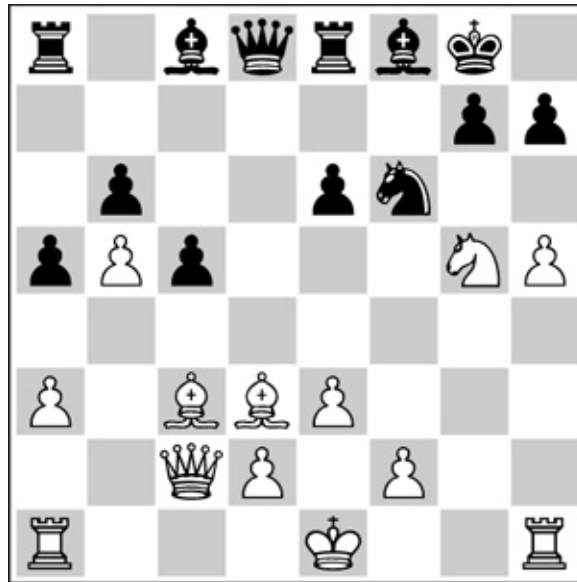
**5...Nd5 6.h5 Nxc3 7.Bxc3 b6**

Black does not undertake anything against the threat that is hanging above her head. However, it is not easy to see what she should have done. Probably, 7...Be7, to vacate the f8-square for the knight, was necessary.

**8.Bd3f5**

Pawn moves like 8...g6 or 8...h6 would also have had disastrous consequences.

**9.gxf6 Nxf6 10.Ng5**



### 10...Ra7

Black must abandon the important h7 pawn, as 10...h6 runs into 11.Bh7+ Kh8 12.Nf7#. But now she is counted out as well.

### 11.Bxh7+ Kh8 12.h6

And Black had had enough. Indeed, she cannot prevent the long diagonal from being opened, after which the c3 bishop intervenes decisively in the attack.

White will gain material after 12...gxh6 13.Bg6 e5 14.Nf7+ Rxf7 15.Bxf7 Re7 16.Qg6, and the many threats will prove fatal to Black.

## 11.3 When is a pawn centre bad?

We have seen a few attractive examples of playing with a pawn centre. Now the question is which methods are at the defender's disposal for a successful operation against a pawn centre. To answer this question, I will distinguish between two defensive strategies:

### A) Blocking the centre

### B) Undermining the centre

#### A) Blocking the centre

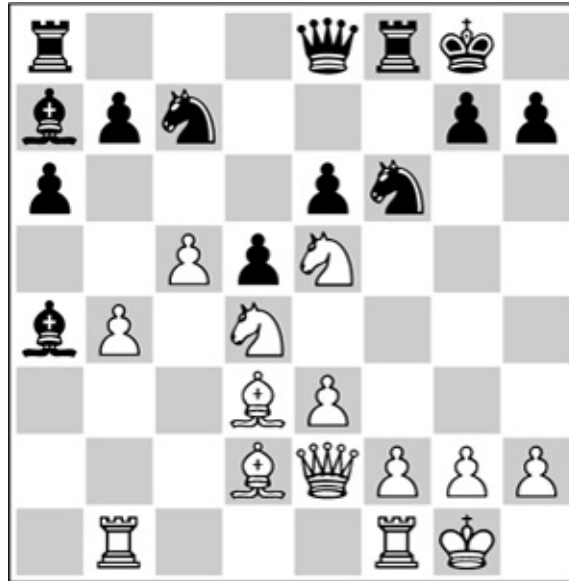
If the pawns in the centre are blocked, mostly the player's own pieces will be restricted in their mobility. In the chapter on the pawn islands theory, we saw how the pieces are hampered in such cases. Nimzowitsch speaks of 'paralysis symptoms in the hinterland'. Here is an illustrative fragment:

□ Kortchnoi, Viktor

■ Nedeljkovic, Srecko



### Vienna Ech-tt 1957 (3)



The white knights are reigning supreme in the middle of the board, and together they have firmly blocked the black pawn centre e6/d5. Looking at the lack of mobility of the black pieces we can indeed diagnose a few ‘paralysis symptoms’ here. The pieces in the ‘hinterland’ (i.e., on the queenside) have trouble being put into action on the kingside.

**1...Nd7**

Black tries to kick back the centrally posted knight; however, the blockading role will be taken over by a white pawn from now on.

**2.f4! Nxe5 3.fxe5 Qe7 4.Qg4 Bd7 5.Rf3**

Another strong possibility was 5.e4.

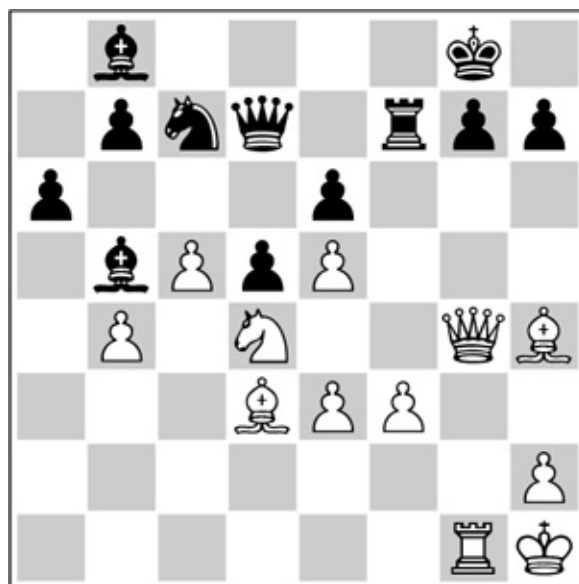
**5...Rxf3**



### 6.gxf3!

In keeping with the spirit of the position. Kortchnoi would like to maintain a strong blockade in the centre, so that he can attack on the wing to his heart's content. The blocked centre cuts off the black pieces from the kingside, and therefore White logically starts a devastating attack on this side of the board.

**6...Rf8 7.Kh1 Bb8 8.Rg1 Rf7 9.Be1 Bb5 10.Bh4 Qd7**



### 11.Nxb5!

The d3 bishop is needed for the attack, and therefore at this point it is more important than the blocking piece, which has already done good service.

**11...axb5 12.Qh5g6 13.Bxg6!**

This sacrifice crowns White's strategy; now the white pieces hurl themselves at

the black king.

**13...hxf6 14.Rxf6+ Rg7 15.Bf6! Ne8 16.Rh6 Kf8 17.Rh8+ Rg8 18.Rxf8+ Kxf8 19.Qh8+ 1-0**

Since in such situations the pawns are tied to their posts, manoeuvring becomes much more difficult. Therefore it is important, when you possess a pawn centre, to keep the pawns mobile. In other words: not to allow them to be blockaded by enemy pieces. In the following fragment, the white player thinks he has fulfilled this condition, but he is confronted with a nice surprise.

□ **Reshevsky, Samuel**

■ **Petrosian, Tigran**

Zurich ct 1953 (2)



White has an unassailable pawn centre. Apart from the bishop on b2, he has put all his pieces in active positions and now he is ready to tear open the kingside with e5-e6. But the great defensive artist Tigran Petrosian comes up with a beautiful parry to this threat.

**1...Re6!!**

We may add this to the masterpieces of chess defence, and Nimzowitsch would have rubbed his hands in glee if he had seen this beautiful example of his 'blockading strategy'.

Most of the white pieces would have been activated after e5-e6. Even the bishop on b2 would have obtained some perspectives, for instance via the e5-square. That is why Black comes forward with this rigorous blockade. At the cost of an

exchange he blocks the white pawn centre, and so the white pieces cannot develop the amount of activity that White had in mind. What's more, as long as the pawns on d4 and e5 are nailed down by the blockade, White will hardly be able to undertake anything with his major pieces, let alone with his b2 bishop, which may well be labelled 'bad' now.

Another important thought behind Black's concept is that after accepting the exchange, White will lose control of the light squares in the centre. As long as Black maintains the blockade, the white pieces will be severely limited in their mobility.

## 2.a4

White cannot say goodbye to his beautiful light-squared bishop just yet.

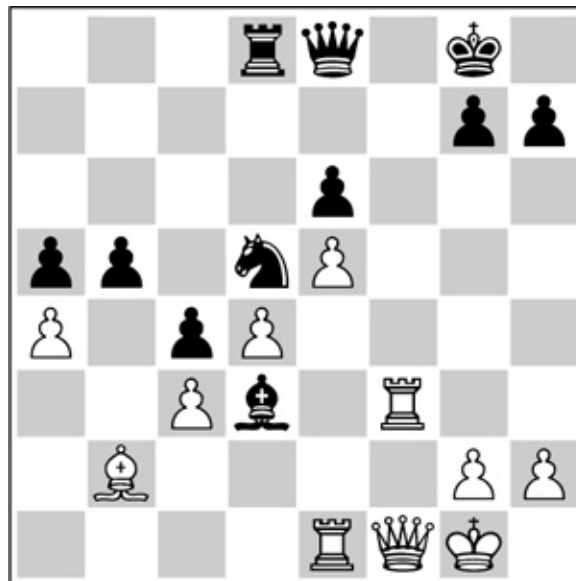
## 2...Ne7!

A second point of the rook move. Now that the e7-square has been vacated, Black can post his knight on the beautiful blockade square d5.

## 3.Bxe6

Played with a heavy heart, since with this move White gives up his best piece. But sooner or later he would have had to do this.

## 3...fxe6 4.Qf1 Nd5 5.Rf3 Bd3



## 6.Rxd3

More or less forced, since after 6.Qf2?, Black would even get the upper hand with 6...b4.

## 6...cxd3 7.Qxd3 b4



### 8.cxb4

How accurately Black has envisaged everything is made clear by the variations that occur after 8.c4, a move which does not look unattractive for White. After 8...Nb6! the white centre pawns remain neatly under control. As long as the black rook and knight are standing guard, White will not be able to carry out the liberating push d4-d5, and he will only be hindered by the weak pawns on a4 and c4. The violent attempt 9.d5 exd5 10.e6 is also doomed to failure after 10... dxc4.

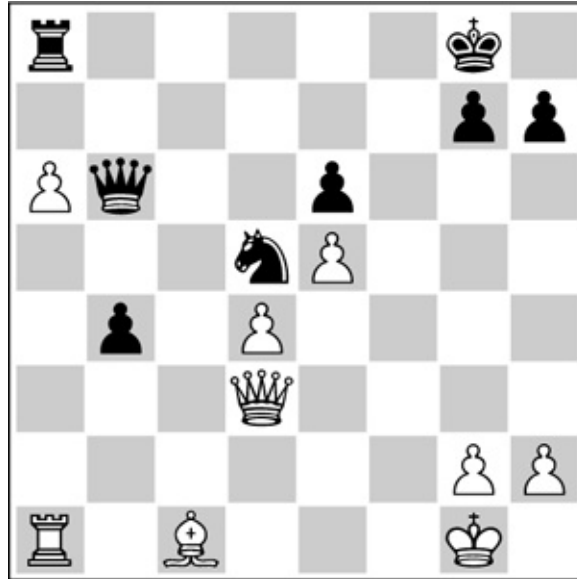
### 8...axb4 9.a5 Ra8 10.Ra1 Qc6

Black must remain on his guard in view of White's troublemaker on the a-file.

### 11.Bc1

The bishop is repositioned on a more active square.

### 11...Qc7 12.a6 Qb6



### 13.Bd2

After this move the position peters out, but also after the better 13.Qc4 Nc7 14.a7 Rxa7 15.Rxa7 Qxa7 16.Qxb4 Nd5, the strong knight would guarantee Black a comfortable draw.

### 13...b3 14.Qc4 h6 15.h3 b2 16.Rb1 Kh8 17.Be1

And here the players agreed to share the point. An exciting battle.

### B) Undermining the centre

A pawn centre is especially strong if the pawns are standing next to each other. Together the pawns control important squares, preventing the enemy pieces from developing activity in the centre.

Obviously, such a pawn formation will be subject to undermining attempts by the enemy. We can see this happening in an opening like the Grünfeld Defence. In some variations, Black hands his opponent a strong pawn centre, and then tries to undermine it.

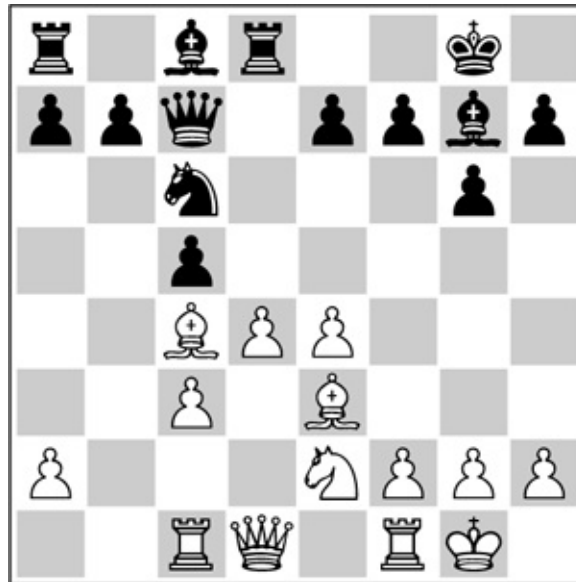
After the moves

### 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3

White is the 'proud owner' of a strong pawn centre. However, after

### 6...Bg7 7.Bc4 c5 8.Ne2 0-0 9.0-0 Nc6 10.Be3 Qc7 11.Rc1 Rd8

Black goes on the warpath, fiercely firing away at White's centre. Black hopes to lure the white centre pawns forward, which would give him squares for his pieces, and furthermore he wants to attack or try to block the advanced pawns again at a later stage.



We have seen that far advanced pawns (in spite of the tactical chances that they offer) can easily become weak. We can point at another aspect of the method of luring centre pawns forward: the farther they are advanced, the more space will be created behind the pawns, and the more dangerous the counterchances of the opposite side will be. We have already seen something similar with the case of the failed flank attack (Kroeze-Grooten, page 164).

You can compare it to a soccer game, where one side is playing with all players on the opponent's half. If the ball is lost, there is suddenly a whole lot of space for the other team to counter. Louis van Gaal, the well-known Dutch trainer, calls this 'many of one's own players in front of the ball', which may result in risky situations before one's own goal.

The idea to draw the opponent out was what Alekhine more or less envisaged when he introduced his Alekhine Defence. After the moves

**1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 Nb6 5.f4 dxe5 6.fxe5 c5 7.d5 e6 8.Nc3 exd5 9.cxd5**

Black has lured the white centre forward, and now, with 9...c4!? he hopes to dive behind the white lines. Of course, such a strategy is quite risky, as the pawns are not exactly harmless when they have advanced thus far.

On occasion, I have adopted an even more extreme approach. In the following game, fearing my opponent's theoretical knowledge, I brought the following, rather provocative moves on the board.

□ **Van de Oudeweetering, Arthur**

■ **Grooten, Herman**

Eindhoven 1989

**1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Ng8!? 3.d4**

At this moment a number of people approached our board, some of whom started to inspect the scoresheet. It looks strange: White has already advanced two pawns quite far, whereas all Black's pieces are neatly arranged on their original squares.

Steinitz, who once wrote jokingly that in his opinion the starting position was perfectly OK, would be satisfied, I remember thinking here!

The idea of the knight retreat is that in the Alekhine Defence, after White's push c2-c4 the knight is very bad on b6, whereas from g8 the knight will be able to jump to the vacated square f5. Another idea, entirely in Alekhine's spirit, is that Black still leaves open the options of either attacking the centre with ...d7-d6 or closing the position with ...d7-d5.



**3...d6 4.Nf3 Bg4 5.Be2 e6 6.0-0 Ne7**

Black takes his knight to the attractive f5-square as soon as possible.

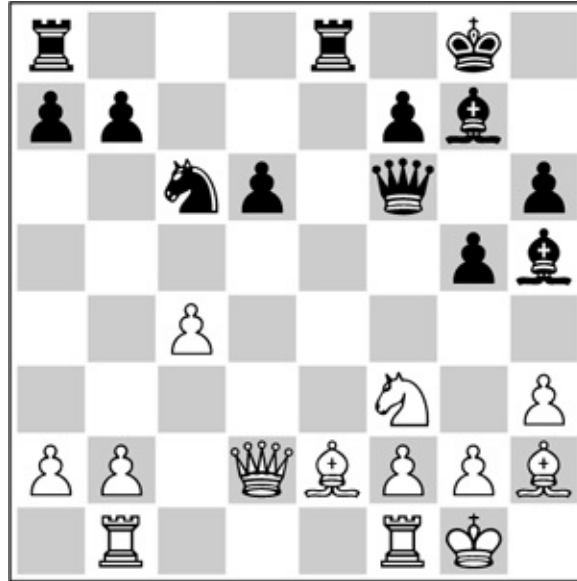
**7.exd6**

A concession, handing Black a majority in the centre. An important alternative is 7.Nbd2, intending h2-h3.

**7...cxd6 8.c4 g6 9.Nc3 Bg7 10.Bg5 h6 11.Bh4 g5 12.Bg3 0-0 13.h3 Bh5**

**14.Bh2 Nbc6 15.d5 exd5 16.Nxd5 Nxd5 17.Qxd5 Re8 18.Qd2 Qf6 19.Rab1**





Here I thought the time was ripe for a sacrifice, but whether Black will be the better for it remains questionable.

**19...Rxe2!?**

After the normal 19...Re6, Black is a tad better.

**20.Qxe2 Nd4 21.Qe3 Bxf3 22.gxf3 Nxf3+ 23.Kg2 Nh4+ 24.Kh1 Qf5 25.Rbd1 Be5?!**

Now 25...Nf3 should have been preferred, which, after 26.Kg2 Nh4+, would have ended in a repetition of moves.

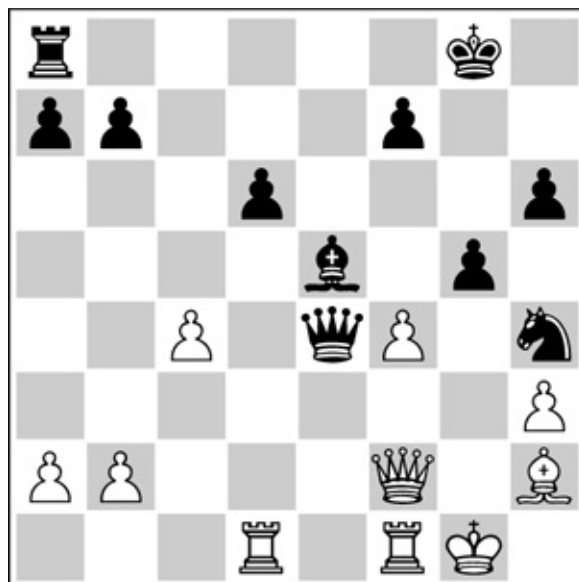
**26.f4!**

During the game I thought that this was asking too much from the white position, but actually it is his best chance.

**26...Qc2 27.Qf2?!**

In approaching time-trouble, the white player is starting to make slight inaccuracies. With 27.Rd2 Qxc4 28.Qd3! he would have retained every chance of a win.

**27...Qe4+ 28.Kg1**



**28...gxf4!**

Black keeps sacrificing without fear. Now that the white centre has been blown apart and the white king is feeling the draught, this knight sacrifice is fully justified.

**29.Qxh4?**

This capture is much too dangerous. Necessary was 29.Rde1 Qg6+ 30.Kb1 Nf5, and the chances are balanced after 31.Qf3!.

**29...Kh7**

This way the rook will also be able to intervene.

**30.Rf2 Rg8+ 31.Kf1 Qxc4+ 32.Ke1?**

This loses quickly, but also after 32.Re2 Rg2, White would draw the short end of the stick.

**32...Re8 33.Kd2 Bxb2**

**0-1**

In most cases the side with a pawn centre will be confronted with a 'demolition job' by the opponent. In the following game we see a beautiful demonstration of these undermining tactics.

□ **Fischer,Robert**

■ **Spassky,Boris**

Reykjavik Wch m 1972 (6)



In the diagram we see the hanging pawns that we have come to know in the previous chapter. A number of features lead us to the conclusion that Black is in trouble in this position. Firstly, his pieces are defensively placed, not offensively as they should be. The white pieces are well positioned to increase the pressure on Black's centre pawns. Especially the position of the queen on a3 is beautiful. White now comes forward with a remarkable concept.

### **1.Nd4! Qf8?!**

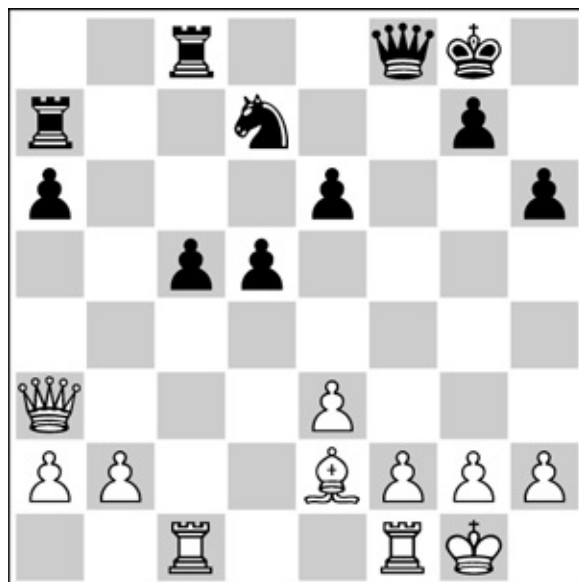
This move was heavily criticized after the game. According to the experts in Reykjavik, Spassky ought to have played 1...Nf6 here. After 2.Nb3 Black can either persist with his wait-and-see attitude with 2...Nd7, or go for the position after 2...c4 3.Qxe7 Rxe7 4.Nd4. Even though White controls the strong d4-square here, Euwe thinks that Black will get counterchances along the b-file. However, Gligoric assesses that White has a huge advantage in this position, and I think he is right. Please compare this position with the game Bertok-Fischer from the previous chapter, and look at the differences. White now has his knight on the beautiful square d4, while Black's counterchances along the b-file are considerably less without the queens.

After the text move, Fischer makes a stunning decision.

### **2.Nxe6**

At first sight, this is very curious. White should apply pressure to the black pawn formation, but instead he exchanges his strong knight for the weak black bishop and strengthens Black's centre. The justification of this exchange is in the next move.

### **2...fxe6**



### 3.e4!!

Herein lies the secret of White's idea. It turns out to be an illusion that the black centre is strengthened by the exchange. With the text move, it is thoroughly undermined.

### 3...d4?

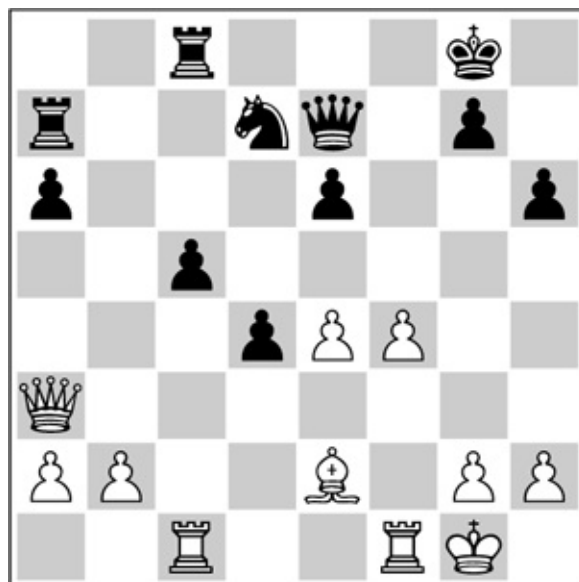
This is an interesting moment to investigate the position closer. Gligoric does not give any comment; Euwe and Fine disapprove of the text move. The Dutch former World Champion gives the alternatives 3...c4 and 3...Nf6; Fine considers 3...dxe4 the best possibility.

On Kasparov's authority in *My Great Predecessors IV*, I am copying the question mark. It is undoubtedly true that White will be able to put pressure on the black centre in all cases. In the position that arises, his bishop is stronger than the knight, whilst his rooks will be able to intervene quickly along the central files. With the text move, the black pawn centre is weakened, and White can play his bishop to the strong c4-square.

### 4.f4

Now that White has a pawn majority on the kingside, he advances it.

### 4...Qe7



### **5.e5!**

With this move White fixes the black pawn on a light square and at the same time increases his space advantage. What's more, he reduces the activity of the black knight to a minimum. If he had allowed ...e6-e5, his chances of an attack would have diminished considerably.

### **5...Rb8?!**

It seems that it just wasn't Spassky's day. Many commentators have deeply studied the defensive plan with 5...Nb6, with the intention to play the knight to d5 and bring a possible ...c5-c4 into the position.

Kasparov punches holes in a great number of these analyses, and concludes that White should continue with the unexpected move 6.Qd3!, intending to set up a dangerous battery with Qe4 and Bd3. After exhaustive analyses it becomes clear that White has the better of the play, but that Black is still very much in the game here.

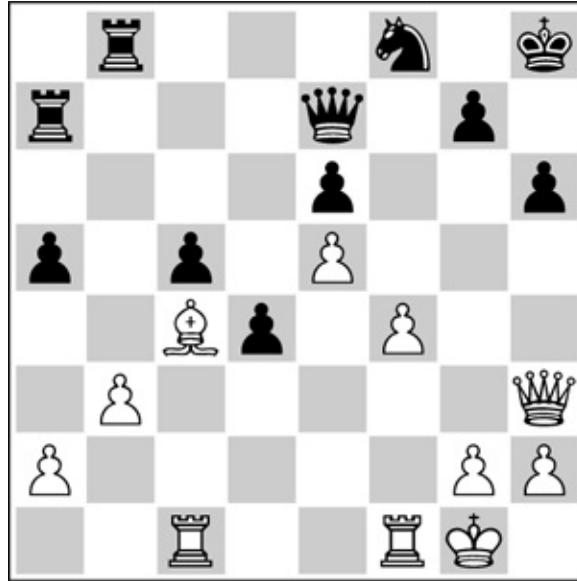
### **6.Bc4 Kh8**

Now that Black has put his rook on b8, the strong bishop cannot be driven away from c4 with 6...Nb6, since White would again have the response 7.Qb3!.

### **7.Qh3! Nf8**

The knight is extremely passive here, and so White can quietly work on a lethal final offensive. Also after 7...Rxb2 8.Bxe6, Black would have had a hard time of it. The white pawns in the centre march on irresistibly.

### **8.b3a5**



**9.f5!**

White further increases the influence of his bishop and opens a file to activate his rooks.

**9...exf5 10.Rxf5 Nh7 11.Rcf1**

Not 11.Rf7?, in view of 11...Ng5.

**11...Qd8 12.Qg3**

The undermining of the black pawn centre is now very unpleasantly felt. White can take his time to build up an attack on the king.

**12...Rbb7 13.h4 Re7 14.e6**

White can permit himself to give up the f6-square, since ...Nf6 can almost always be met with an exchange sacrifice.

**14...Rac7 15.Qe5 Qe8 16.a4**

This move emphasizes Black's powerlessness.

**16...Qd8 17.R1f2 Qe8 18.R2f3 Qd8 19.Bd3**

White directs his full attention to the other diagonal.

**19...Qe8 20.Qe4**

Now the threat is 21.Rf8+, after which Black gets mated.

**20...Nf6**



### Conclusion:

A pawn centre is especially strong if the pawns can march side by side, and if the space behind them is well covered. The opposite side should try to undermine or block such a pawn avalanche.

## Exercises

11.1



White disposes of a centre in which the pawns are neatly arranged beside each other. In order to protect the e4 pawn, White plays **29.Nd2**. How can Black undermine the centre now?

[Solution](#)



11.2

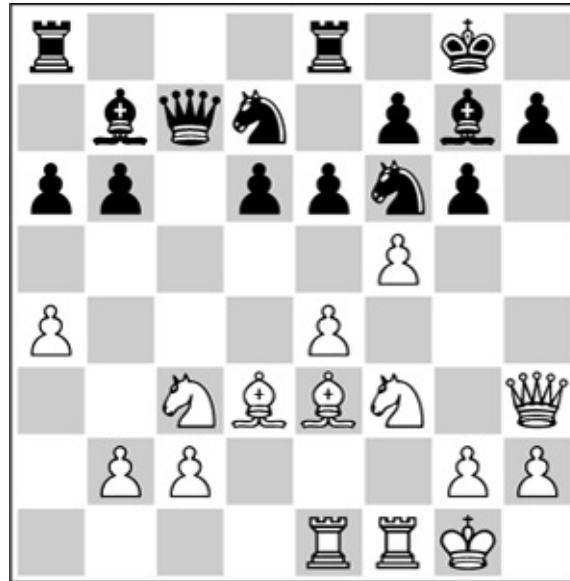


In the diagram position White, to move, has a massive pawn centre. Which plan should he choose?

- A) Kingside castling followed by **f2-f3** and a later **e3-e4**.
- B) Kingside castling followed by **g2-g4**.
- C) Queenside castling, and then the pawn storm with **g2-g4**.
- D) Keep the king in the centre and advance on the flank with **g2-g4**.

[Solution](#)

11.3



With **15.f5** White has given the signal for the attack. How should Black react?

Choose from:

**A) 15...exf5**

**B) 15...gxf5**

**C) 15...e5.**

[Solution](#)

11.4



White has two strong centre pawns. How can he increase his advantage? Weigh up which of the following plans is best:

A) White plays **Rxf8**, **h2-h4**, **Kh2** and **Bh3**, in order to exchange the bishops. Then his centre pawns will become mobile.

B) White plays **Rf1-f4**, to double on the f-file. An exchange on f4 will strengthen White's centre further and White can try to invade on the queenside with his rook.

C) White plays **Rxf8**, **a2-a3** and **Rf2**, exchanging all rooks. In the bishop ending the advantage of his centre pawns will grow.

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 12

# The diagonal

### 12.1 Introduction

When, as a student, I applied to the Eindhoven Chess Club, which participated in the Major League (nowadays called the Master League) of the Dutch club competition, I made the acquaintance of a player who was reputed at our club to be an excellent strategist.

This player, Jos Sutmuller, turned out to be a great fan of former World Champion Tigran Petrosian. He told me that he had worked through Peter H. Clarke's book *Petrosian's Best Games of Chess 1946-63* twice. 'It's always lying in my bathroom!', he laughingly informed me.

Sutmuller uses the club competition to put his ideas, which are quite strange in the eyes of an outsider, into practice. I once saw him carry out the following manoeuvres.

FR 16.1 (COS)

□ **Berghout,Cor**

■ **Sutmuller,Jos**

Eindhoven 2008

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 Nf6 4.e5 Ng8**

A bizarre move. Black hopes to compensate his lag in development and space with a healthy pawn structure and a harmonious set-up of his pieces. The knight strives for the beautiful square f5. However, common opinion claims that this loss of time does outweigh the advantages.



**5.Bd3 c5 6.c3 cxd4 7.cxd4 Qb6 8.Ne2 Bd7 9.0-0**

Perhaps 9.a4 is to be recommended here.

**9...Bb5 10.BM**

For the moment White refuses to give up his good bishop. 10.Bxb5+ Qxb5 11.Nc3 Qb6 12.Nf3, in order to try to exploit the lead in development that White has built up, seems preferable.

**10...Qa6!? 11.Re1 Bd3 12.Bxd3 Qxd3**



Black has used his last five (!) moves to trade his bad bishop for White's good one. This loss of time is compensated for by the fact that the exchange has taken the sting out of White's possible attack. Additionally, the pawn on d4 is a target, and the bishop on c1 will not be able to develop any activity anywhere.

### 13.Qb3

Perhaps White should have kept the queens on the board with 13.Qa4+ Nc6 14.Nf3. In this position he would have better chances to put his lead in development to good use.

### 13...Qxb3 14.Nxb3 Nc6 15.Bd2 Nge7 16.Rac1

In a game Benschop-Suttmuller, Eindhoven 1990, there followed 16.Ree1 Nf5 17.Be3 f6!, and White lost her influence in the centre.

### 16...Nf5 17.g4?!

Not only a weakening move; it also gives Black a point of attack to open the h-file, and Suttmuller seizes it with both hands.

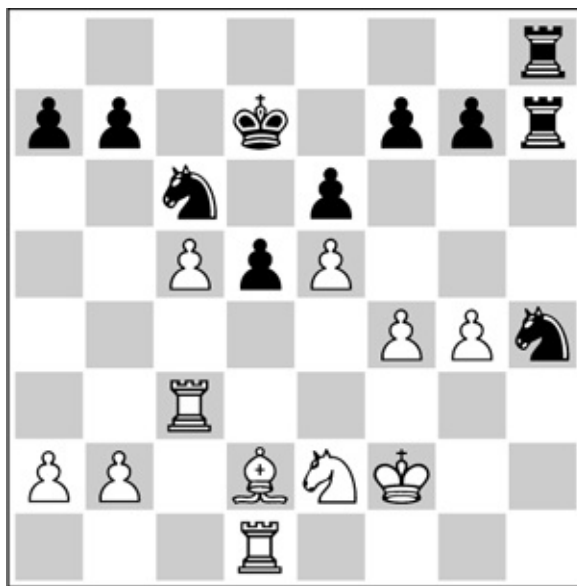
### 17...Nh4 18.Red1 h5 19.h3

The ugly 19.g5 would have been better.

### 19...Be7 20.Rc3 Kd7 21.f4 hxg4 22.hxg4 Rh7 23.Nc5+?!

This exchange favours Black.

### 23...Bxc5 24.dxc5 Rah8 25.Kf2



### 25...g5!

Pulling away the ground beneath White's feet.

### 26.Rb3 Kc8 27.Bc3?

Here 27.Rh3 was relatively better. But it's still not exactly a picnic.

### 27...Ng6 28.fxg5 Rh2+ 29.Ke1 R8h3

### 30.Ra3 Re3 31.Rd2 Nf4

0-1

After the game I asked Suttmuller how he could justify such time-consuming manoeuvres. His reply was: 'I cannot really play chess that well, but I do know what good and bad bishops are. And with that knowledge I can hold my own

quite nicely in the highest Dutch league.'

Of course this was a jocular statement. But then, in another match, I saw how he brought the following opening variation on the board with black:

**1.f4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Qb6 5.Nf3 Bd7 6.Be2 cxd4 7.cxd4 Bb5**

And on the following move he traded off the light-squared bishops.

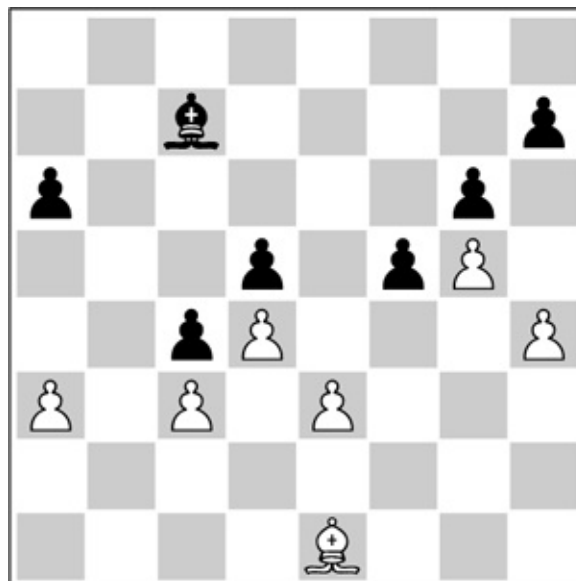
Then an amazing scene unravelled. Players from the Eindhoven team approached him and congratulated Sutmuller on his win. Now that he had traded his bad bishop for White's good one, everybody was apparently convinced that the win would only be a matter of time. The opposite team was naturally surprised by this small show, but some six hours later the 0-1 result was indeed written on the scoreboard. The white player had succumbed to the weakness of his light squares...

Is it possible to win a game solely on the basis of these static factors? From chess history we know that players like Capablanca, Petrosian and later also Timman and Andersson were indeed capable of taking all dynamics from a position and attaining an advantage purely on the basis of static plusses. Let us restrict ourselves to the theory of the good and the bad bishop for the moment.

Definition:

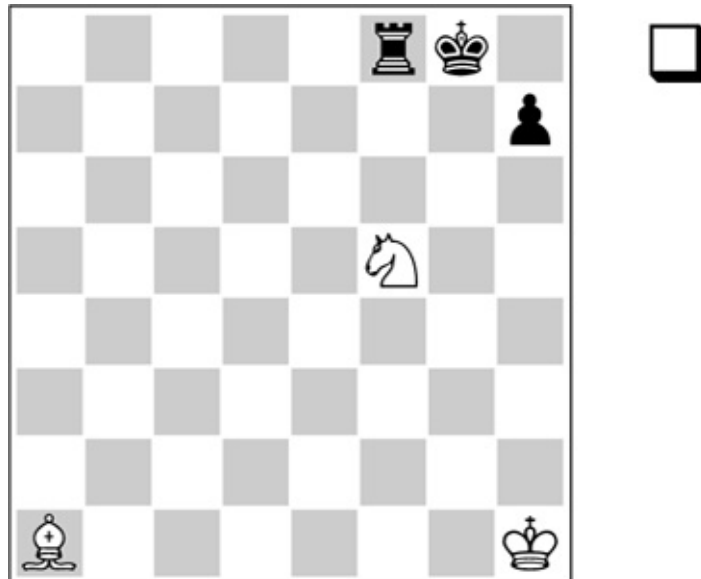
- A bishop is bad if its own pawns are fixed on the colour that is controlled by this bishop.

The diagram below illustrates this:



From the definition, we can conclude that a bishop is always hampered by a pawn of its own side if it is on the same colour. The activity of the bishop increases, the more open diagonals it has at its disposal.

Another important characteristic of the bishop is that it can operate from a great distance, contrary to the knight. Here's another diagram to illustrate this.



### 1.Nh6#

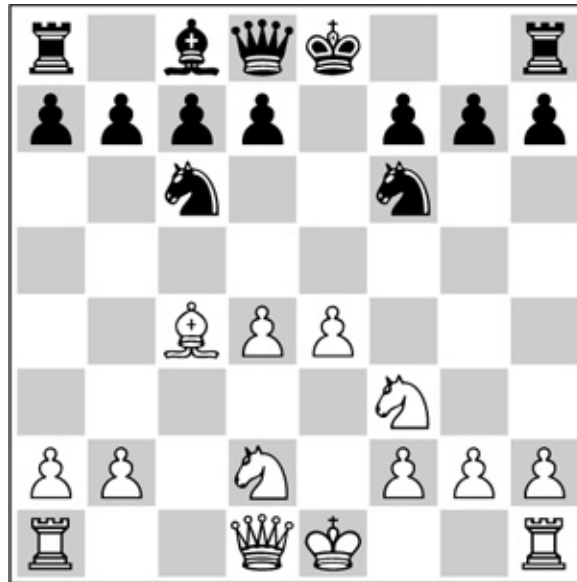
Whether the bishop is on e5, f6 or a1, the mate picture remains unchanged. As a rule it is even pleasant for the bishop to be far away. This makes it harder to attack it (i.e., it is less vulnerable), while it is able to perform the same task. In the book *How to open a Chessgame*, where various grandmasters were asked to explain 'in public' how they approached the opening, I read an interesting fragment worked out by grandmaster Gligoric. In short, it came down to the following.

After the opening moves

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6**





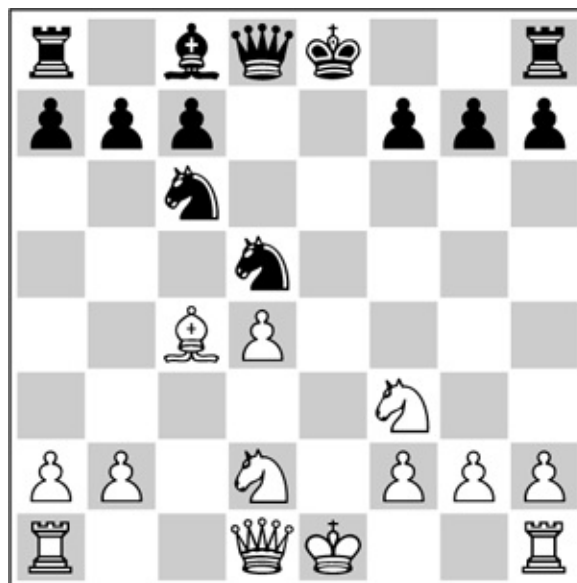


**8...d5!**

Now White is more or less forced to play

**9.exd5 Nxd5**

and regretfully he has to conclude that his beautiful dreams turn out to be an illusion.



His 'proud' pawn centre has been blown to smithereens; instead he is now stuck with an isolated pawn on d4, which can be neatly blockaded by the black pieces (...Bc8-e6, ...Nc6-e7, ...c7-c6, and the strong square d5 is definitively in Black's hands). According to opening theory the position is still balanced, but in practice there is hardly a grandmaster who enters this variation with white.

Gligoric explains that the white bishop is 'too close'. On c4 it is vulnerable, which enables Black to equalize in one blow with the 9...d5 break. Gligoric adds that if in the first diagram position the bishop would 'coincidentally' have stood on b3, Black would not have achieved the same with ...d7-d5. Since the bishop is standing 'at a distance' (so that's what this is about!), White can meet ...d7-d5 with e4-e5, after which his centre remains intact and he can play for an attack later on.

This allows us to formulate two important strategic principles.

- 1) The queen, rook and bishop work best from a distance; king, knight and pawn have a smaller range of action.
- 2) For the queen, rook and bishop to operate optimally, open files, ranks and diagonals are needed.

In this chapter we will look at open diagonals only.

The action range varies for queen, rook and bishop. With operations on the other wing, the bishop will mainly fulfil a supporting function.

From the second principle we can deduce that bishops prefer not to have centre pawns standing right in front of them; not their own pawns, and preferably no enemy pawns either. In general we can say that a bishop does not particularly like obstacles (see 12.3).

In the next section we will investigate this subject matter more closely.

## **12.2 Bishops work from a distance**

In several examples in this book we have seen that bishops like to do their job from a great distance.

In an earlier diagram, which showed the mating motif with knight and bishop, we saw that on a1 the bishop fulfilled the same function as on most of the other squares on the long diagonal. However, on e5 it would be much more vulnerable than on a1.

It is useful to make a distinction between the employment of the bishop in the middlegame and in the endgame. In the middlegame, the bishop supports actions on the other wing. In this book we restrict ourselves to the treatment of a few attacks on the king.

In the endgame, we will mainly deal with the types of positions that the side with the bishop should strive for.

### **A) The bishop in the middlegame**

In some openings we see a player immediately develop his bishop to a long

diagonal. This is called the ‘fianchetto’ of a bishop. The player who does this, waits before pushing his centre pawns, and intends to make use of the long bishop diagonal later on in the middle-game.

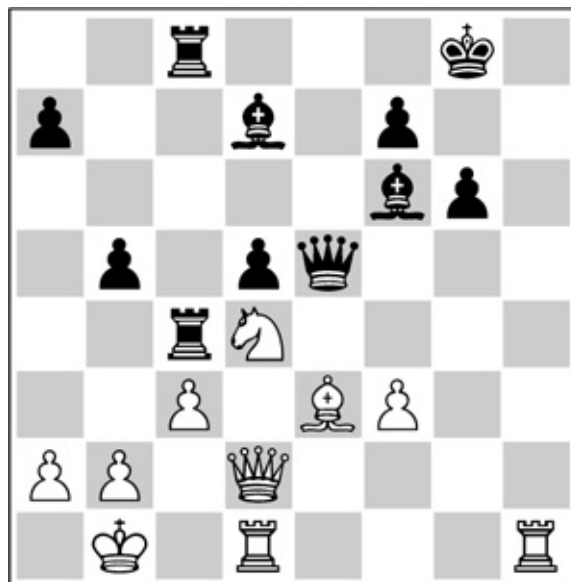
Of course there are opening systems where a fianchettoed bishop is the key piece for an attack on the king. We know, for instance, the Dragon Variation of the Sicilian, where Black cherishes his bishop on g7, sometimes even at the cost of an exchange.

In the following game we see Black make elegant use of the diagonals he has managed to open with heavy sacrifices.

□ **Lanka,Zigurds**

■ **Fedorov,Alexey**

Kishinev 1998 (2)



Black is doing well here. Besides the fact that he has an extra pawn and the bishop pair, his pieces are active as well. But he should not forget that the h-file has already been opened and that his king may become a target. ‘There’s nothing more difficult than winning a won game’, a grandmaster once said.

**1...b4**

And therefore, Black goes full speed ahead.

**2.Bf4**

2.cxb4 is met by 2...Rc2, and now:

A) 3.f4 doesn’t help due to 3...Bf5! 4.Ka1 Qe4 5.Qe1 Bg4 6.Nxc2 Bxb2+ 7.Kxb2, and now:

A1) Not 7...Qxc2+ (as indicated by Ftacnik) 8.Ka1 Bxd1 9.Qd2! and White holds! – whereas things would go wrong for him after 9.Qxd1?? Qc3+ 10.Kb1

Qxb4+ 11.Qb3 Qe4+;

A2) But with 7...Rxc2+! 8.Ka1 Bxd1 9.Qxd1 Qc4, Black wins.

B) 3.Qe1 Bf5! 4.Ka1 Re8 – the bishop cannot retreat, and therefore White loses material.

**2...Qf5+!!**

About this move, grandmaster Petursson writes in Chessbase Megabase: ‘The peak in a chess player’s life: a magnificent queen sacrifice with which Black achieves the win.’ By the way, Petursson indicates that with the prosaic 2... Bf5+! Black could also have won, and this is probably correct. However, the winning line in the game is not only exceptionally beautiful, it is also highly effective.

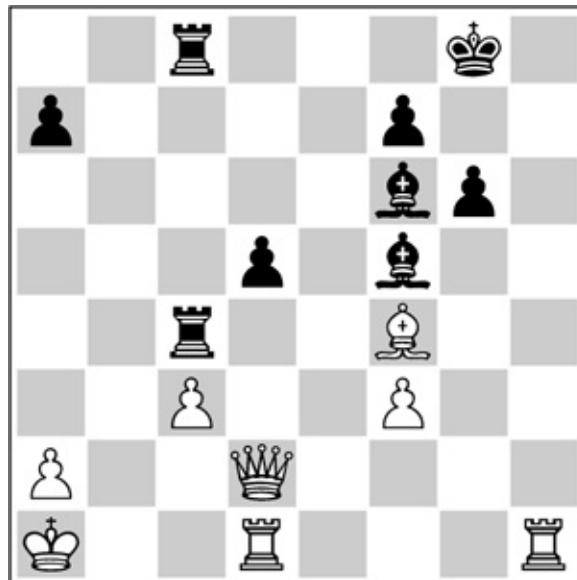
**3.Nxf5**

Refusing the sacrifice will not help White out either. After 3.Ka1, Ftacnik indicates that Black wins with 3...bxc3 4.Nxf5 cxd2! 5.Nd6 Rxf4 6.Nxc8 Bxc8 7.Rxd2 Rxf3. Of course, 3.Qd3? also loses to 3...Qxf4.

**3...Bxf5+ 4.Ka1**

Not 4.Kc1 in view of 4...bxc3 5.Qxd5 (5.bxc3 Rxc3+ 6.Kb2 Rxf3+ and the barrage of bishops decides the battle in Black’s favour) 5...cxb2+ 6.Kd2 Rd4+ 7.Qxd4 Bxd4 8.Ke2 Rc2+ 9.Bd2 Bc3, and Black wins a decisive amount of material.

**4...bxc3 5.bxc3**



**5...Rxf4!**

Black has ‘only’ two bishops for the queen, but the helplessness of the white pieces renders his position indefensible. If Black tries to regain his material too quickly, he will only end up in a drawish endgame: 5...Bxc3+? (Ftacnik) 6.Qxc3

Rxc3 7.Be5 f6 8.Bxc3 Rxc3 9.Rxd5, and White is even a tad better.

### **6.Rc1**

Of course, 6.Qxf4 is not possible on account of 6...Bxc3#; and on 6.Kb2 Black wins with the elegant 6...Rb4+ 7.Ka3 Rb6!.

### **6...Rxf3**

The power of the bishops is overwhelming in this position. The black rooks are merely respectful bystanders who serve to enable the bishops to do their job optimally.

### **7.Kb2**

There is no remedy. For instance, 7.a3 also fails to 7...Rcxc3 8.Rxc3 (8.Ka2 Rxa3 #) 8...Bxc3+, as Ftacnik shows.

### **7...d4**

This move is a cornerstone of Black's attacking concept. The last remains of the defensive wall around the white king are broken down.

### **8.c4**

Nothing helps anymore. The following line gives a typical picture of how beautifully the black pieces cooperate in the round-up of the white king: 8.Ka3 Be7+ 9.Kb3 Rb8+ 10.Kc4 Be6+ 11.Kxd4 Rd8+ 12.Ke4 Rxd2 13.Kxf3 Bd5+ 14.Ke3 Bg5#.

### **8...Rb8+9.Ka1d3+**

Optimal use of the diagonals! For all you nitpickers out there: yes, 9...Bf2 also wins for Black!

### **10.Rc3 Rf2!**

**0-1**

After 11.Qxf2 (11.Qc1 (Ftacnik) 11...Rc2-+) 11...Bxc3+, White gets mated.

A fine illustration of the power of an open diagonal is given in the following game, where an artist of the attack takes on a virtuoso of the defence.

QI 4.3 (E12)

**Kasparov, Garry**

**Andersson, Ulf**

Tilburg 1981 (8)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.a3 Bb7 5.Nc3 Ne4 6.Nxe4 Bxe4 7.Nd2 Bg6 8.g3 Nc6 9.e3 a6 10.b4 b5 11.cxb5 axb5 12.Bb2 Na7 13.h4 h6**



Black's peculiar opening set-up has brought him into trouble, and with his last move he has made things worse. Necessary was 13...h5. Nevertheless, during the game Andersson probably thought he had a bright future here. After the obvious 14.Bg2 he has planned 14...d5, in order to play for the c4-square with ...c7-c6, followed by the manoeuvre ...Na7-c8-d6. Playing for weak squares in the enemy camp is something the Swede can do like nobody else. But with Kasparov he's got the wrong man.

#### **14.d5!**

According to the motto 'Throw away the garbage!', Kasparov sacrifices a pawn in order to enable his b2 bishop to work at full strength. With this positional pawn sacrifice he also ensures that the development of Black's kingside is hampered.

#### **14...exd5 15.Bg2c6**

While White is quickly developing his pieces, Black is constantly forced to lose time. He wants to maintain the pawn on d5, as in the future the c4-square will always be beckoning.

#### **16.0-0 f6**

16...f5, intending to prepare kingside castling with ...Qe7, ...Qf7 and ...Be7, is no solution to Black's problems either. After 17.Nf3! Qe7 18.Ne5 Qe6, there follows 19.a4!, and then Black will suffer on the queenside.



### 17.Re1!

Played in Fischer style. With each move a new piece is activated, before the attack materializes. Not so clear would be 17.e4, since after 17...dxe4 18.Bxe4 Bxe4 19.Nxe4 Be7 20.Qh5+ Kf8, Black keeps on defending tenaciously.

### 17...Be7



### 18.Qg4!

Perfect timing at every move. Now that the pawn on g7 is unprotected, White brings his queen into play, and in passing he prevents Black from castling.

### 18...Kf7 19.h5

Only now is the bishop driven back. At the same time, White fixes the weak squares on the kingside.



**19...Bh7**



**20.e4!**

At the right moment White opens the position, bringing all his pieces to life.

**20...dxe4 21.Bxe4 Bxe4 22.Nxe4**

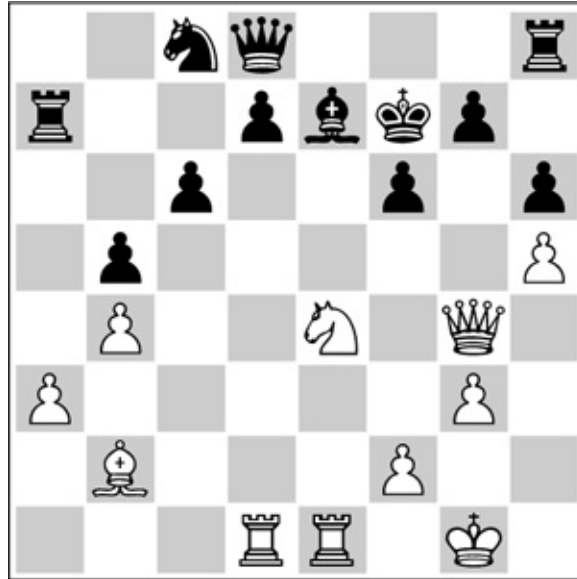
22.Rxe4 certainly deserved attention as well. With 22...Rf8 23.Rae1 Nc8 24.Nf3, White would also manoeuvre all his pieces into the attack, and a severe blow will not be long in coming.

**22...Nc8**

Andersson now involves his knight, which was out of place, in the defence of his kingside as quickly as possible, as a little calculation shows that White's attack is already too strong after 22...Rf8 23.Rad1 d5 24.Nxf6!. The knight cannot be captured on account of mate (24...Bxf6 25.Qe6#, or 24...gxf6 25.Qg6#), and so the black king will be brought down by the many threats.

It is harder to find how White continues his attack after 22...Re8 23.Qg6+ Kf8 (23...Kg8? loses to 24.Nxf6+! Bxf6 25.Bxf6 Qxf6 26.Rxe8+). Any chess player senses that the black king is not safe here, but how can White besiege it? In his analysis, Kasparov shows what he has found here. With the original 24.g4!, White prepares the manoeuvre Ne4-g3 f5, and there is no decent remedy for Black.

**23.Rad1 Ra7**



Andersson is known as a super-defender. With the text move he enables his rook to join the defence via the seventh rank, and he is ready for ...d5, followed by ...Nd6, striking down White's initiative. But now Kasparov shows how a bishop should be involved in the attack in an open position. With his next move he demonstrates that the dynamic plusses outweigh the static ones.

#### **24.Nxf6!!**

This knight sacrifice had been foreseen by White several moves earlier. The protective layer around the black king is broken down.

#### **24...gxf6**

After 24...Bxf6 25.Qg6+ Kf8 26.Bxf6 gxf6, White had planned the elegant 27.Re6!.

#### **25.Qg6+ Kf8**



### 26.Bc1!

The bishop has done its duty on the long diagonal and now offers its services on another diagonal: c1-h6.

### 26...d5 27.Rd4!

It all runs like clockwork. Who wouldn't have played the immediate 27.Bxh6+ here? But after 27...Rxh6 28.Qxh6+ Kg8! 29.Rd4 Bf8!, Black would have been proved right with his defensive idea of putting his rook on the seventh rank.

### 27...Nd6 28.Rg4 Nf7



The knight has arrived on the battlefield and lends a helping hand. At least, that's what it looks like, but a closer look at the board teaches us that something entirely different is at hand...

### 29.Bxh6+!

Precisely at the most unexpected moment, Kasparov strikes on h6. For obvious reasons the bishop cannot be taken: 29...Rxh6 30.Qg8#; 29...Nxd6 30.Qg7+ and 31.Qxh8+.

### 29...Ke8 30.Bg7

1-0

It's nice that the bishop, which has been of such good service in this game, is allowed to make the final move. Black is helpless against the march of the h-pawn after 30...Rg8 31.h6. After the game, Andersson remarked that he was not very keen to play another game with Kasparov!

## B) The bishop in the endgame

Earlier in this book we saw a few examples, especially in endgames, where the knight was much more powerful than the bishop.

This is due to the different properties of both pieces. Obviously, the bishop can only play on one colour, whereas the knight can, in principle, reach all the squares on the board.

In the chapter on strong squares, we have mainly looked at positions where the side with the bishop was weak on the squares that were not covered by this bishop, and therefore had to sit and watch how the player with the knight secured the loot via these squares. In this type of position, an important property of the bishop, namely its long-range effect, was of secondary importance. Still, in many cases the bishop does get the better of it.

So we have to determine in what type of position a bishop is better than a knight. To that end, we will formulate a few criteria:

The bishop is better off in open positions. Preferably:

- a) no pawns in the centre;
- b) pawns on two flanks, preferably rook pawns;
- c) no fixed pawns.

We shall see that the player who possesses the bishop generally has good winning chances if more than one of these conditions are met.

Former World Champion Anatoly Karpov is a virtuoso in exploiting such small advantages. We give two examples where he wins with bishop versus knight.

□ **Karpov, Anatoly**

■ **Serper, Grigory**

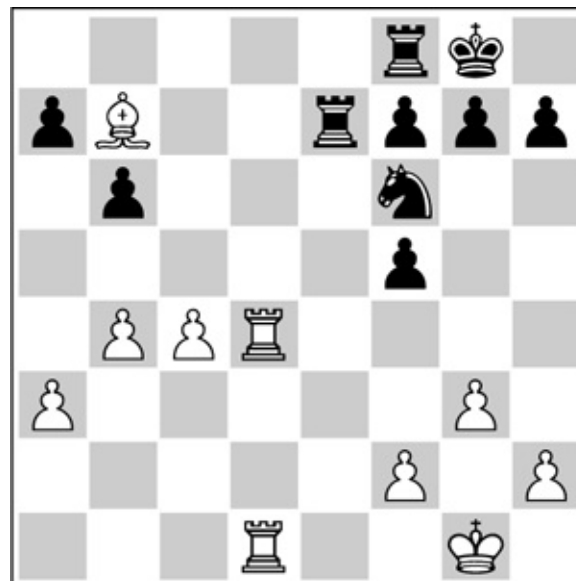
Dortmund 1993 (5)



White liquidates to an endgame where the bishop is clearly stronger than the knight.

**1.Nf5! exf5 2.Qxe7 Rxe7 3.Bxb7 Rf8**

3...Rxb7 is out of the question in view of the winning back rank check 4.Rd8+.



**4.Ba6!**

This was the position Karpov had envisaged when he went for this endgame. His majority on the queenside enables him to create a passed pawn at his leisure, and it will be virtually unstoppable. Since centre pawns are lacking, Black has no footholds for his knight and the latter cannot lend a helping hand in the defence.

**4...g6 5.c5 bxc5 6.bxc5 Rc7 7.Rc1**

Here we see why the bishop is standing so well on a6. It controls the promotion

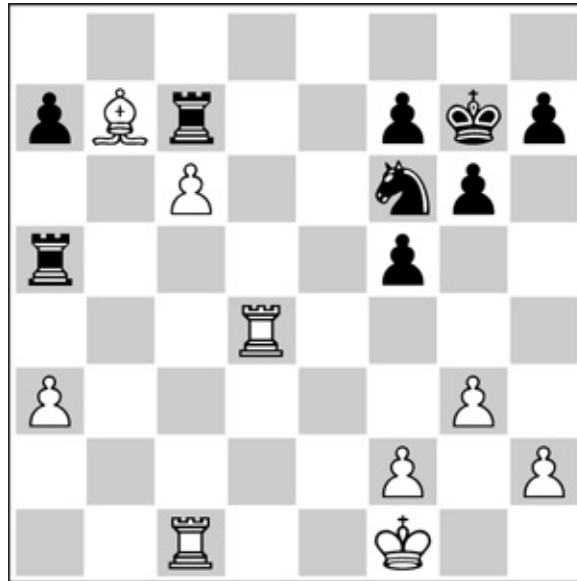
square, making it impossible for Black to further attack the pawn.

**7...Re8 8.c6 Kg7**

It was better to try and bring the king to the centre with 8...Kf8.

**9.Kf1 Re5 10.Bb7 Ra5?!**

A passive set-up with 10...Ree7 was a better option.



**11.Red1!**

Karpov does not allow himself to be distracted. He doesn't care at all about the pawn on a3 if he can promote his c-pawn: 11...Rxa3? 12.Rd7!.

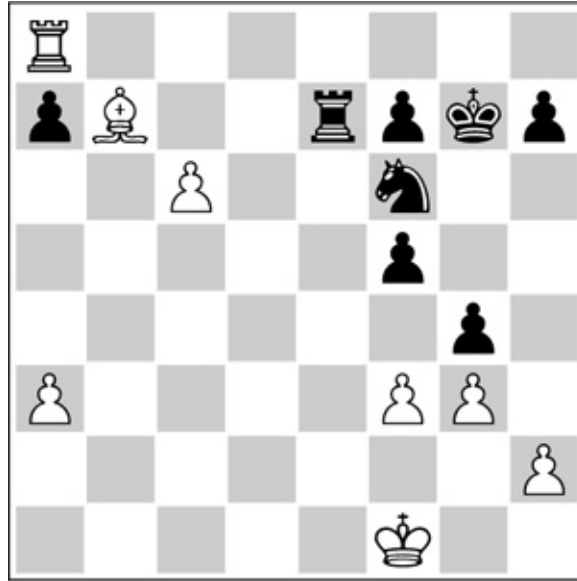
**11...Re5?**

And now the black player definitively collapses. The only move was 11...Re7 12.Rc4 Rc7 13.a4, but White retains good chances of a win.

**12.Rd7 Re7 13.Rxc7 Rxc7 14.Rd8 Re7 15.f3**

Here 15.a4 would have been a little more direct.

**15...g5 16.Ra8g4**



**17.fxg4?!**

Remarkably enough, Karpov makes a slip. Much better was 17.f4, after which Black's resistance would soon have been broken.

**17...fxg4?**

But Black returns the favour. He should have continued with 17...Nxg4! and after 18.h3, 18...Ne5, when things are not so simple. Thus, 19.Rxa7? fails to 19...Nxc6.

**18.Rxa7 Nd5 19.Ra4 Ne3+**

Black panics, but the game was lost in any case. After 19...f5 20.Rd4 Nc7 21.a4, the a-pawn will promote.

**20.Kg1 Kf6 21.Rf4+**

And Black threw in the towel.

Incidentally, there is another great Karpov game where he employed the same bishop manoeuvre Bb7-a6.

□ **Karpov, Anatoly**

■ **Andersson, Ulf**

Madrid (3) 1973

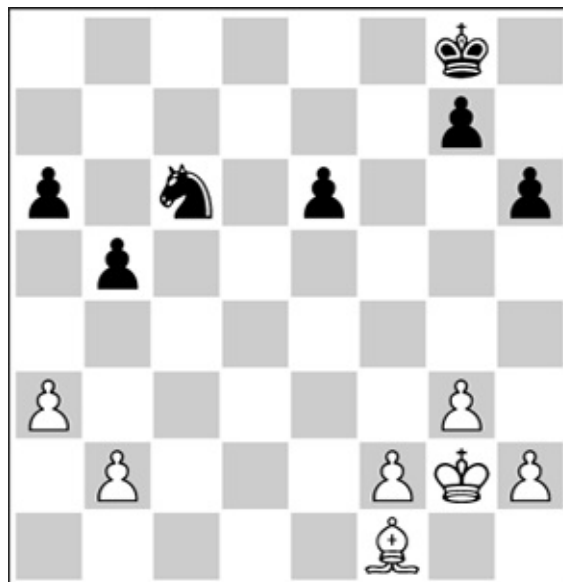


**19.Bb7!! Rc7 20.Ba6 Rc6 21.Qb3 Qb8 22.Qa4 Rc7 23.Qb5 Nf6 24.f3 d5 25.c5**  
And the extra pawn on the queenside eventually decided the issue.

□ **Karpov, Anatoly**

■ **Polgar, Zsuzsa**

Madrid 1992 (4)



This is the type of endgame where the bishop is to be preferred to the knight. Almost all the above-mentioned factors play a role here. The winning plan consists of different stages. First it is advisable to centralize the white king.

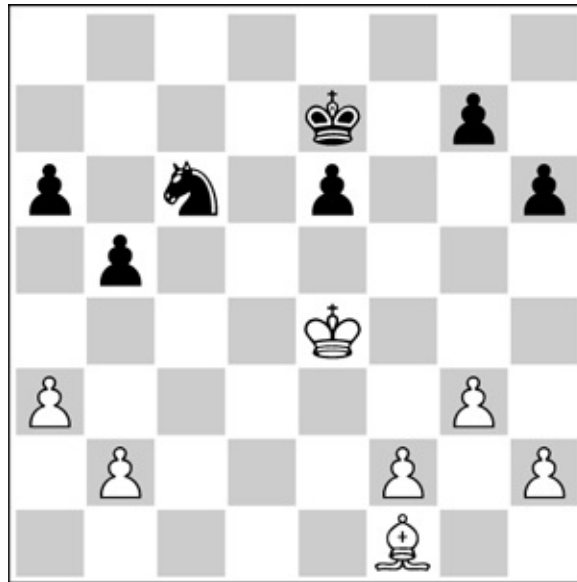
**1.Kf3**

Karpov writes that he had also looked at the standard move 1.a4. After 1...Nd4



2.f4 e5! 3.Kf2 exf4 4.gxf4, White is doing very well, but in his opinion Black would have more chances of a draw than in the game.

**1...Kf7 2.Ke4 Ke7**



**3.a4!**

Now White does attack Black's queenside pawns. After 3...bxa4 4.Bxa6, the black pawn on a4 is doomed, after which the win is not difficult.

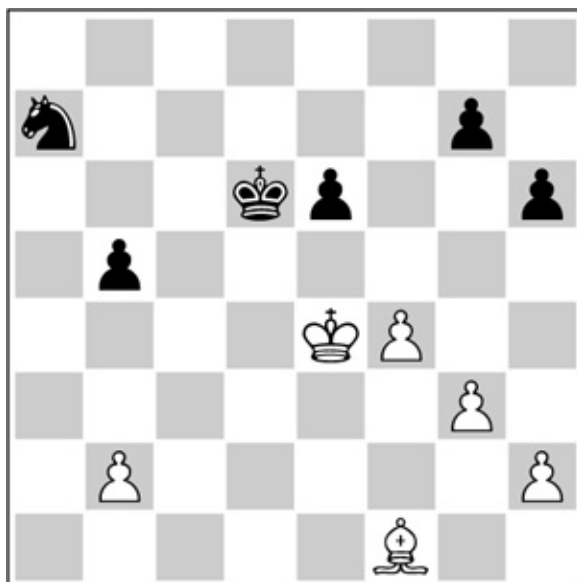
**3...Na7**

The knight is very passive here.

**4.axb5 axb5**

4...Nxb5 looks a little less unpleasant, but Polgar has correctly calculated that after 5.Bxb5 axb5 6.Ke5!, she would lose the pawn ending.

**5.f4 Kd6**



### 6.Bd3

Karpov is taking his time. In *Chess Informant* he shows that the direct approach with 6.f5 would have forced a decision. After 6...e5 (6...exf5+? would allow the king to enter on g6 with 7.Kxf5) 7.g4 b4 8.h4 Nc8 9.g5 hxg5 10.hxg5 Nb6 11.Bb5 Nd5 12.Bc4 Nb6 (12...Nf4 is forced here), White has an elegant breakthrough in store: 13.f6! gxf6 14.g6!, and the knight will be too late.

### 6...Kd7 7.Be2 Kd6

Or 7...Ke7!?

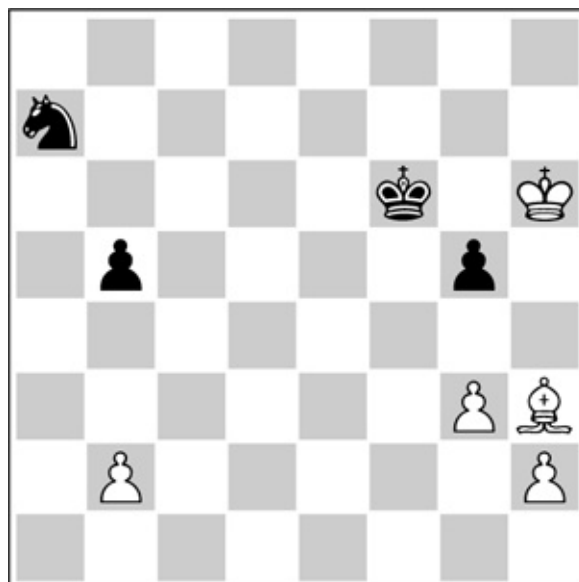
### 8.Bf1!

The right square for the bishop, as will become apparent soon.

### 8...Kd7 9.f5 Kd6 10.fxe6 Kxe6 11.Bh3+ Kd6 12.Kf5 g5?!

A more tenacious defence, even though also insufficient to save the draw, was 12...Ke7, with the possible continuation 13.Kg6 (not 13.Ke5?! on account of 13...Nc6+ 14.Kd5 Nb4+ 15.Kc5 Nd3+, and the important b2 pawn will leave the board) 13...Kf8 14.Bf1 b4 15.Kf5 Nc6 16.Ke4!, and the weak pawn on b4 will fall.

### 13.Kg6 Ke7 14.Kxh6 Kf6



### 15.Bd7!

A typical example of a strong bishop versus a crippled knight. All of the knight's squares are dominated.

### 15...Ke7

After 15...b4, White wins with 16.h4 gxh4 17.gxh4 Ke7 18.Kg7 Kxd7 19.h5, and once again the rook pawn turns out to be the knight's sworn enemy. After the text move White also liquidates to an endgame where his h-pawn will have the last word.

### 16.Bxb5! Nxb5 17.Kxg5 Kf7 18.Kh6 Nd4 19.g4 Nf3 20.h3 Kf6 21.b4 1-0

With some grandmasters we can see a tendency to strive for endgames where the knight successfully takes on the bishop. Petrosian and Andersson are such players, who know those positions where a knight is to be preferred inside out. Of Karpov and Fischer we know that they were better than average at playing with bishop against knight. At least Fischer knew what he was doing in the following famous game.

□ **Fischer,Robert**

■ **Taimanov,Mark**

Vancouver m 1971 (4)



White is clearly better. There are no pawns in the centre, and there are pawns on two wings, none of which are fixed for the time being.

### 1.Bf1!

With this move White plays his bishop to better squares. He also draws the a6 pawn forward, which clears the b5-square for his pieces. As we shall see later on, the white king will profit from this.

### 1...a5

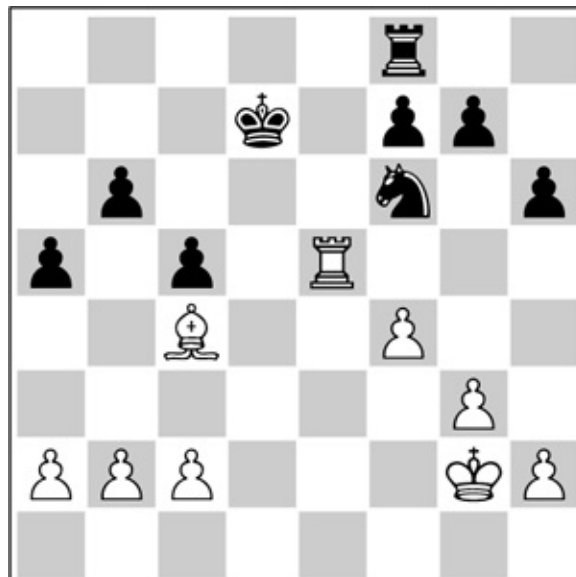
More or less forced.

### 2.Bc4 Rf8

For the time being, Black must adopt a passive set-up.

### 3.Kg2

As always in such situations, the king must be played to the centre first.



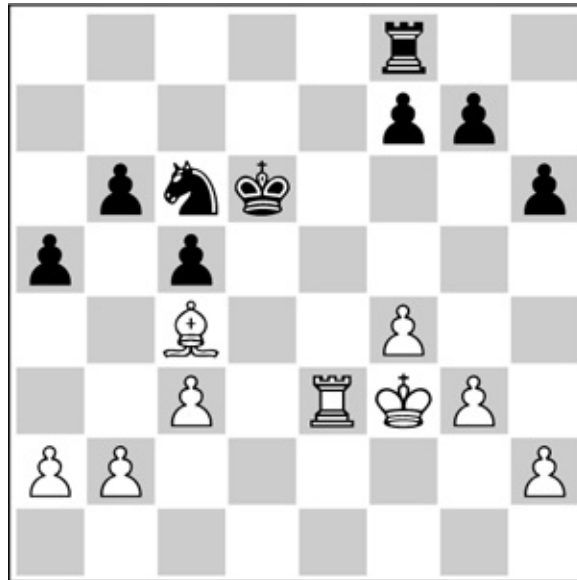
### 3...Kd6

Actually, the knight would be better on this square, since it would defend the f7 pawn, relieving the rook of the burden of defending it. But after 3...Ne8, 4.Bb5+ Kd8 5.Rd5+, followed by 6.Rd7, is unpleasant for Black, since White invades with his rook on the seventh rank and the black pieces leave a helpless impression.

### 4.Kf3 Nd7 5.Re3 Nb8 6.Rd3+ Kc7 7.c3

Already depriving the black knight of the squares d4 and b4.

### 7...Nc6 8.Re3 Kd6

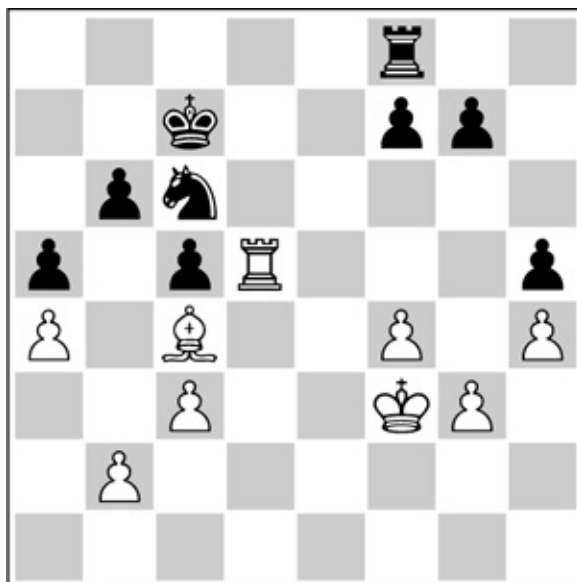


### 9.a4!

On principle, the side with the bishop should not fix pawns, certainly not on the wrong colour. But here the situation is a little different. The bishop is not hindered by the fact that a rook pawn is fixed on a light square, but by this fixation, the line of march that the white king will take is safeguarded.

### 9...Ne7 10.h3

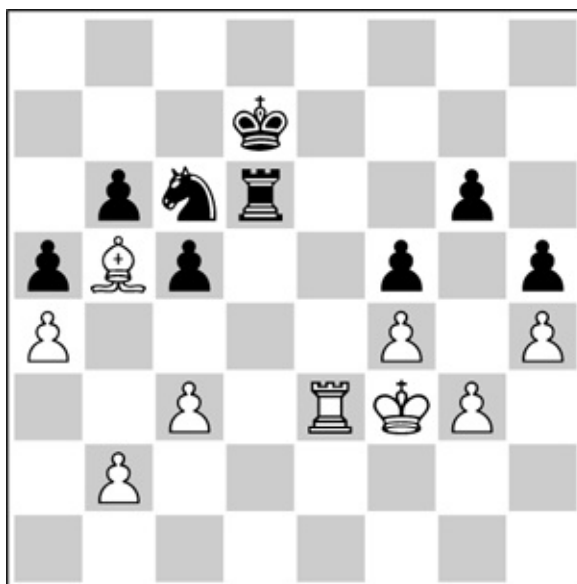




### 13...f5

Another pawn fixed on the colour of the bishop. Euwe claims that 13...g6 would have posed more problems, but I fail to see what he would have replied to 14.Bb5! with the positional threat of 15.f5. For example, ...Ne7 has been ruled out and 14...Rd8 fails to 15.Bxc6, winning a piece.

**14.Rd2 Rf6 15.Re2 Kd7 16.Re3 g6 17.Bb5 Rd6**



### 18.Ke2

An instructive moment, since now three different types of endgame can ensue:

A) A pawn ending is entered after 18...Kc7 19.Rd3 Rxd3? (better is 19...Kd7!, avoiding the pawn ending after 20.Rxd6+ Kxd6 21.Kd3 Ne7) 20.Kxd3 Kd6? 21.Bxc6 Kxc6 22.Kc4, which is winning for White because he has several tempo

moves at his disposal, for example: 22...Kc7 23.Kb5 Kb7 24.c4 Kc7 25.Ka6 Ke6 26.Ka7 Kc7 27.b3! Kc6 28.Kb8 and wins;

B) A rook ending ensues after 18...Kc7 19.Bxc6 Kxc6 20.Re7. Although Black will have to assume a passive attitude, probably White cannot make any progress;

C) An ending of bishop versus knight would have arisen if instead of his last move (18.Ke2) White had played 18.Rd3. After 18...Rxd3+ 19.Bxd3 Nd8!, Black is just in time to keep the balance, for instance: 20.Bc4 Ke7 and now Black threatens to set up a kind of fortress with ...Nd6, when the white king will never be able to enter. After 21.Bd5 Kd6 22.Bg8 Ke7 23.Ke3 Nb7 24.Kd3 Nd6, White has nothing more to play for.

With the text White hurries with his king to the queenside before entering the intended bishop versus knight ending.

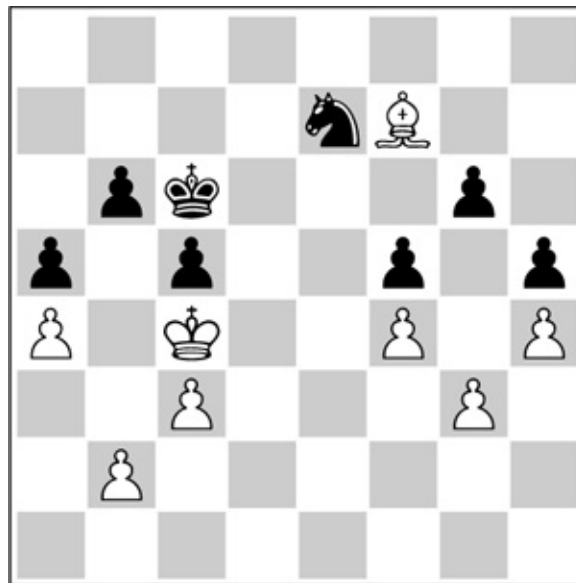
**18...Kd8?**

Now White can simplify and recapture with the king on d3. First 42...Rf6! (Soltis) gave Black drawing chances.

**19.Rd3! Kc7 20.Rxd6 Kxd6 21.Kd3 Ne7**

Now 21...Nd8 would be a mistake in view of 22.Be8, winning a pawn.

**22.Be8 Kd5 23.Bf7+ Kd6 24.Kc4 Kc6**

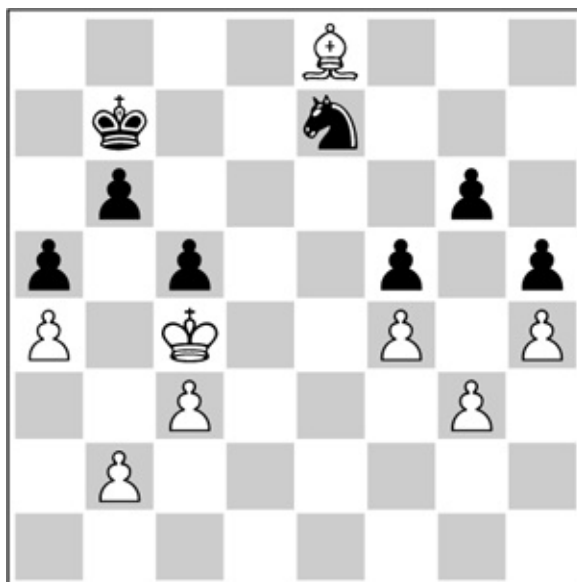


**25.Be8+**

Here we see how strong the bishop is. It keeps the knight tied down, as the latter must protect the weak pawn on g6. In the meantime, the bishop drives away the black king, enabling his own king to invade deeper into the black position.

**25...Kb7**





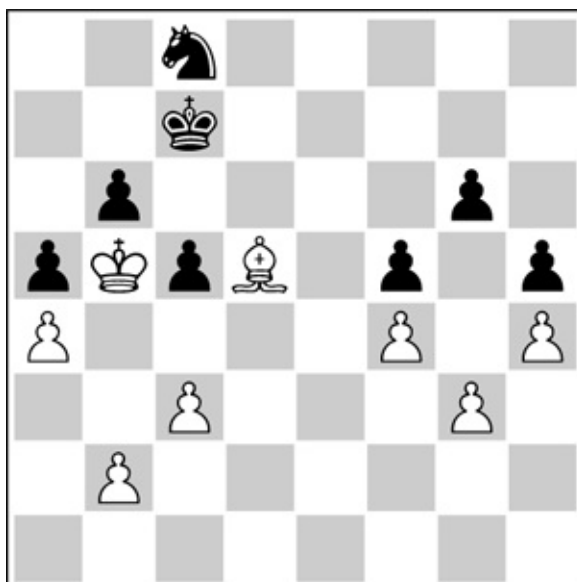
**26.Kb5 Nc8!**

Unexpectedly, Black makes use of a tactical trick that suddenly emerges in the position. The threat is 27...Nd6#. On 26...Ka7 27.Bc6, Black would soon end up in zugzwang.

**27.Bc6+ Kc7**

27...Ka7 is met by 28.Bd5 Ne7 29.Bf3, after which the knight has to make a move, and the white king walks into the black camp via c6.

**28.Bd5**



**28...Ne7**

Taimanov persists in passive defence. Euwe agrees with him, judging by his following analysis.

After 28...Nd6+ 29.Ka6 Ne4 30.Bf7 Nxd3 31.Bxd3 Kc6 32.Be8+ Kc7 33.Kb5 there are two possibilities for Black:

A) 33...Ne2 34.Bxh5 Nxf4 35.Bf7 Nh3 36.h5 Ng5 37.Bg8 f4 38.Kc4 f3 39.Kd3, and the h-pawn decides ;

B) 33...Kd8 34.Bc6 Kc7 35.Bf3, and Black is in zugzwang.

### **29.Bf7 Kb7 30.Bb3**

Introducing new tempo play.

### **30...Ka7 31.Bd1 Kb7 32.Bf3+ Kc7**

After 32...Ka7, a tempo move by the bishop on the long diagonal, forcing the knight to abandon the c6-square, will suffice.

### **33.Ka6**

It has taken some time, but now White is gaining ground. The black king is tied to the protection of the pawn on b6. White only has to 'walk around the block' with his bishop in order to nail the knight down again.

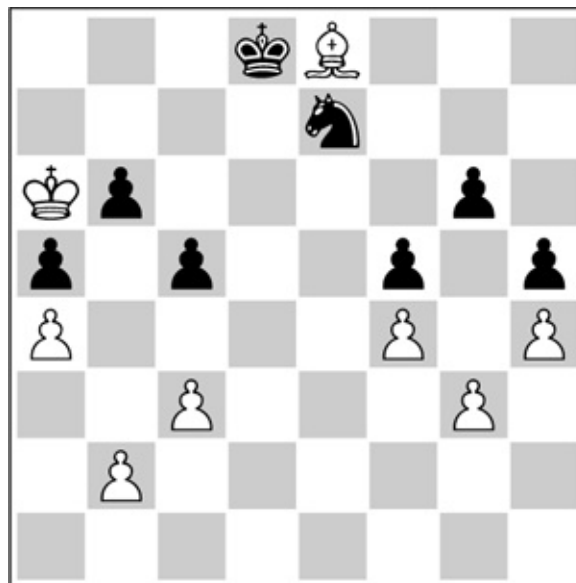
### **33...Ng8 34.Bd5 Ne7**

As we have seen in the notes to the 52nd move, the more active 34...Nf6 is again prospectless.

### **35.Bc4 Nc6 36.Bf7 Ne7 37.Be8**

This is the position White has been aiming for. Now it looks as if either the knight or the king will have to abandon the protection of a pawn. A typical case of overburdening, we might say. However, there is still another defence for Black.

### **37...Kd8**



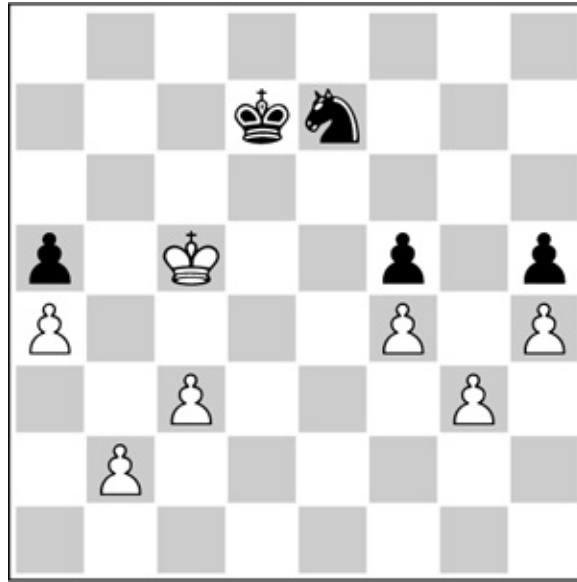
This appears to be a setback for White. After 38.Bf7 Kc7, he has achieved nothing. In reality, the diagram position marks the climax of this endgame.

Fischer now sacrifices his bishop for three pawns and he has calculated flawlessly that the knight will perish.

**38.Bxg6! Nxg6 39.Kxb6 Kd7**

39...c4 would also lose after 40.Kxa5, followed by 41.Kb5 and Kxc4, picking up all of Black's pawns.

**40.Kxc5 Ne7**



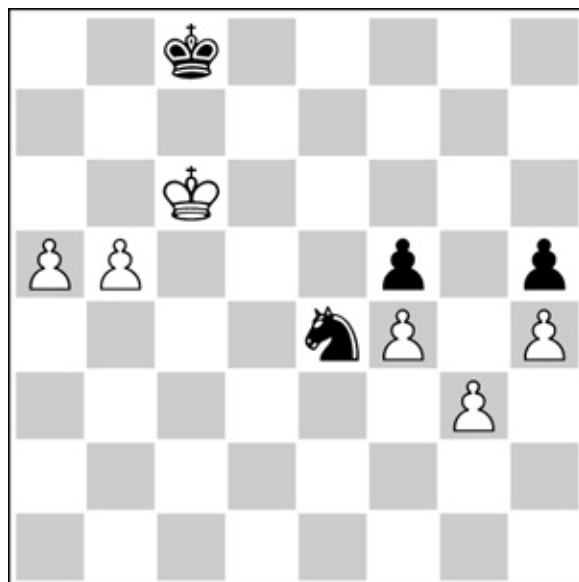
**41.b4!**

White must not lose time. His pawns must be pushed as quickly as possible. The white king is ideally placed, because it supports the queenside pawns and keeps open the option of invading on the kingside. Furthermore, it blocks the knight's route towards the pawn on g3.

**41...axb4 42.cxb4 Nc8 43.a5 Nd6 44.b5 Ne4+ 45.Kb6 Kc8**

Forced, since after 45...Nxb3 46.a6 the a-pawn cannot be stopped.

**46.Kc6**



### 46...Kb8

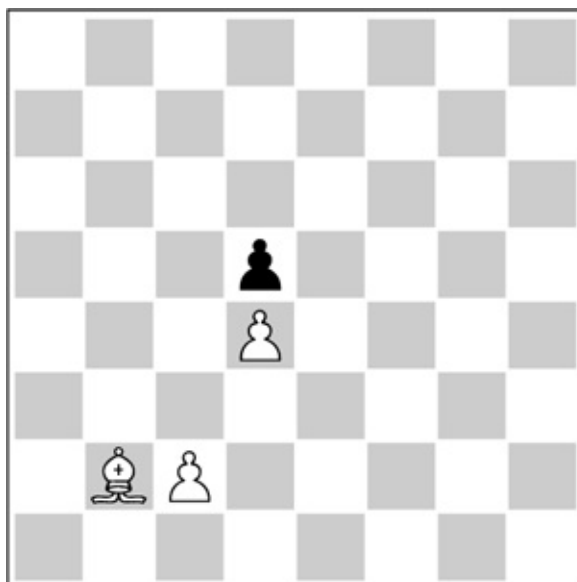
Or 46...Nxg3 47.a6 Kb8 48.b6 Ne2 49.a7+ Ka8 50.Kc7, and one of the pawns will queen. Such variations underline the problem with a knight: it cannot intervene from a distance.

### 47.b6

Here Taimanov shook his opponent's hand. There could have followed: 47...Nc3 48.a6 Ka8 49.a7! (White could still ruin everything with 49.Kc7? Nd5+ and it is a draw; after the text move Black is in zugzwang) 49...Na4 50.b7+ Kxa7 51.Kc7, and again the b-pawn promotes to a queen.

## 12.3 Open diagonals

In our introduction, we have seen that the bishop has full play in positions with open diagonals. However, if the bishop meets with obstacles on these diagonals, its activity will decrease dramatically. We shall distinguish between three types of obstacles, which are illustrated with the following schematic diagrams:

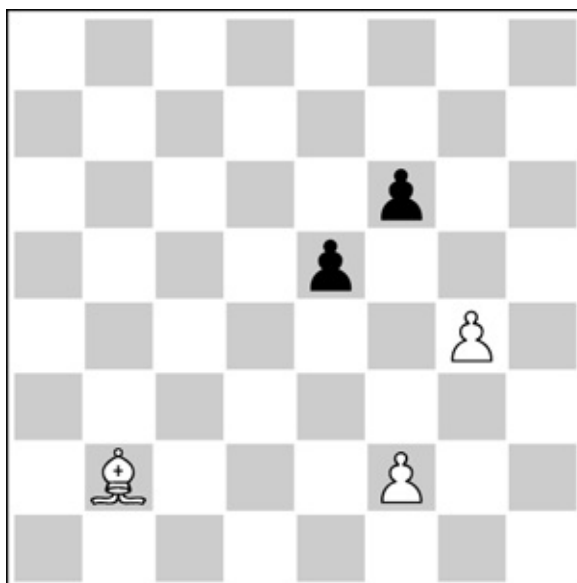


### Obstacle 1: own pawn

The bishop is looking ‘at the back’ of its own pawn on d4, as it were. On d4, the pawn is an annoying obstacle for the bishop, and this is mainly because it has been fixed there by the pawn on d5.

There are two ways to increase the activity of the b2 bishop:

- The bishop is moved to another diagonal where it does have some elbow room (for example, Bb2-a3 or Bb2-c1). This way it can be put in front of the pawn, where generally it can do something useful;
- White can help the fixed pawn to move forward by attacking the blockader. This can be done with c2-c4 here.

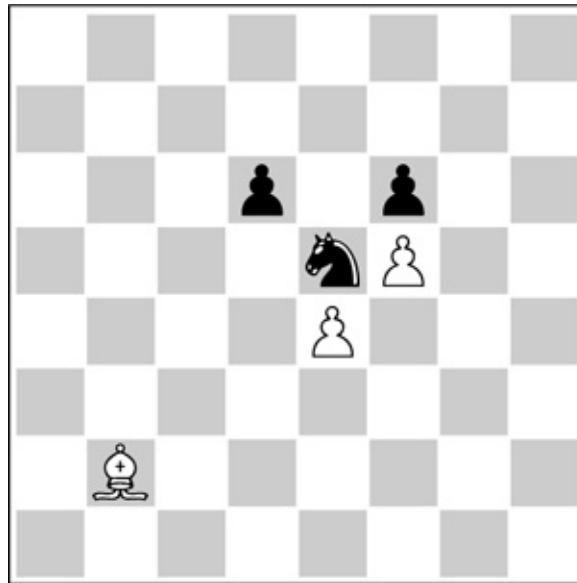


### Obstacle 2: ‘granite block’

Enemy pawns on the colour of the bishop can also annoyingly hamper its mobility. I would characterize the e5/f6 pawn block as a ‘granite block’ against which the bishop is banging its head.

There are two possibilities to deploy the bishop in this position:

- The bishop is moved to another diagonal where it does have elbow room;
- White can attack the pawn block, in this case with f2-f4 or g4-g5.



Obstacle 3: ‘tower of strength’

The black knight is a ‘tower of strength’ on its strong point e5, keeping the bishop’s activity under control. In fact e5 is a strong square for Black because White has abandoned it with f4-f5. The bishop will have to change diagonals if it actually wants to be able to do something, for instance with Bb2-a3.

In order to understand in what types of position and in what ways we can deploy a bishop optimally, we will look at two different cases where the bishop is confronted with obstacles:

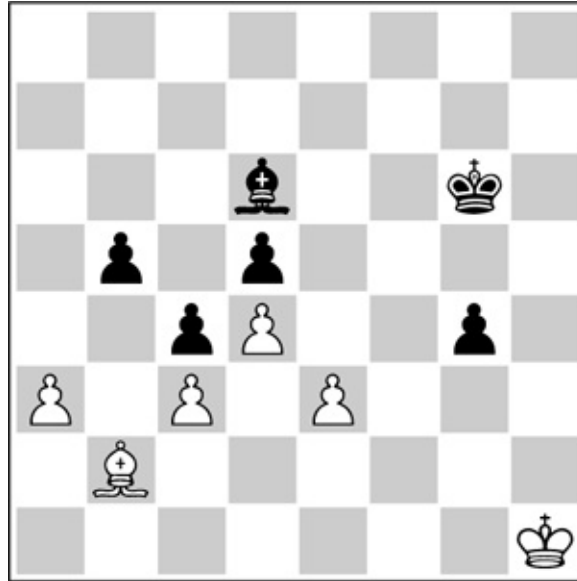
**A) The bishop is looking ‘at the back’ of its own pawn.**

**B) The bishop ‘bites on granite’.**

The discussion of these two situations will enhance our insight into the way bishops should be handled.

**A) The bishop is looking ‘at the back’ of its own pawn**

In the diagram we see an extreme example of a bad bishop. It illustrates how the white bishop is hampered by its own pawns.



bad bishop

In general White can choose between two types of plans:

A1) Repositioning the bishop;

A2) Breaking the blockade.

The former plan is often seen in positions with a pawn chain. By a ‘pawn chain’ we mean a number of pawns that are connected and fixed up against the enemy pawns. We encounter such pawn chains in openings like the French and the King’s Indian Defence.

Such a fixed structure was seen in the following game.

KI 17.4 (E92)

□ **Kiss, Pal**

■ **Kotronias, Vasilios**

Kavala 2005 (6)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Be2 0-0 6.Nf3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.Bg5 h6  
9.Bh4 Na6 10.Nd2 Qe8 11.a3 Bd7 12.b3 Nh7 13.0-0**



The pawns that are locked together on e4, e5, d5 and d6 make up the pawn chain. In this position, a logical plan for Black is to play his bad bishop outside the chain. How he does this we will soon see.

**13...h5!**

You would expect Black to continue 13...f5, which, by the way, is a normal move here. But with the text move, Black first of all threatens to lock up the bishop on h4 by ...g6-g5 followed by ...h5-h4. He also prepares the manoeuvre ...Bg7-h6, creating a bright future for his bad bishop, especially in view of the fact that White will be more or less compelled to continue with f2-f3.

**14.f3 Bh6 15.Bf2**

White does not allow the bishop to get to e3. There are players who do not bother about such trivialities, but in general we can say that it would improve Black's situation.

**15...Qe7 16.Kh1 h4 17.Rg1?!**

It is doubtful whether White should allow himself to be walled in like this.

**17...Bg5 18.Qe1 Kg7**

A subtle move, vacating the square h8 for a rook.

**19.Rb1 Nc5**

The right moment to bring the knight to life. Otherwise it would remain passive for a long time after b3-b4.

**20.b4 axb4 21.axb4 Na4 22.Nb3 Nxc3 23.Qxc3**

Black has rid himself of a bad piece, and now he can get on with his operations on the kingside.

**23...Nf6**

New reinforcements are brought in.



**24.Ra1 Nh5 25.Rxa8 Rxa8 26.Ra1 Rh8!**

Of course, Black wants to keep this rook on the board. The a-file he leaves to White.

**27.Kg1**

White sees a few dangers looming and tries to escape with his king.

**27...Bf4**

Thus, the 'bad' bishop now fulfils a nice role. The white king cannot move further to escape from the danger zone, and what's more, Black vacates the g5-square for the queen.

**28.Be3?!**

Not a very good move. The white bishop was still guarding some vulnerable dark squares, and now White trades it for Black's weak bishop.

**28...Qg5 29.Kf2 f5**

The normal continuation, but 29...h3! should have been considered, as this forces 30.g4 (30.g3 loses immediately to 30...Bxg3+ 31.hxg3 Qxg3+ 32.Kf1 h2) 30...Bxg4 31.fxg4 Qh4+ 32.Kg1 (32.Kf1 Ng3+!) 32...Bxh2+! 33.Kb1 Qg3 34.Bf1 Bg1, and Black rakes in a fat profit.

**30.exf5 gxf5 31.Bf1 Bxe3+**

Black's strategy may be called successful. He has rid himself of a bad piece and White still has problems facing the threats on the kingside.

**32.Qxe3f4**

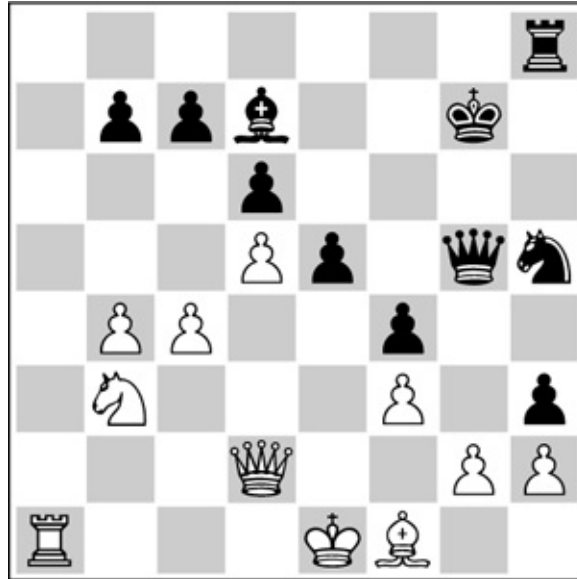
Black settles for a small advantage which, however, will bring him quick success.

**33.Qd2?!**

Oddly enough, White should have continued 33.Qa7.

**33...h3 34.Ke1?**

Now the white player really messes up. Here, 34.Kg1 was the only move, even though it is no picnic anymore for White.



**34...Ng3!**

Very well spotted.

**35.Bd3**

After, for instance, 35.c5 hxg2 36.Bxg2, the merit of the knight sacrifice becomes apparent: 36...Rxh2 has now become possible, after which it is all over.

**35...Ne4!**

Another crushing blow.

**36.Bxe4 hxg2**

And the pawn cannot be stopped anymore. White resigned, as 37.Kf2 is met by 37...g1Q+ 38.Rxg1 Rxh2+ and Black wins the house.

The other plan of breaking the blockade is shown in the following fragment.

□ **Gausel,Einar**

■ **Lomo,Markus**

Gausdal 1998 (4)



White has a gigantic space advantage, but in a position like this, with quite a lot of pawns, it is hard for the bishops to find employment. The bishop on e4 attacks c6, but that point can easily be protected. On the kingside this bishop is ‘biting on granite’, so there is not much to play for there either. The b2 bishop is altogether a piece of ‘dead wood’ at the moment. With this observation, and on top of that the fact that the c5 pawn is hanging, the following move is not so hard to find:

### **1.Rd6!**

White is more than willing to ‘sacrifice’ an exchange. Actually, this can hardly be called a sacrifice, since the protected passed pawn on d6, combined with the formidable bishop on b2, provide fantastic compensation.

### **1...Rc8**

Black refuses to accept the peace offering, but this means that he will now be confronted with a dangerous intruder.

After 1...Bxd6 2.exd6, the main threat is 3.Qc3, so 2...f5 is forced. After 3.Bc2 Bc8 4.b4, the light-squared bishop comes into play as well. Black must sit and watch how White will deal the decisive blow.

### **2.b4 Ba8 3.g3 Kg7 4.h4**

Very cleverly played by White. He increases his space advantage on the kingside, and, more importantly, the move makes a bishop manoeuvre possible that Black can hardly prevent.

### **4...Bd8**

After another waiting move, such as 4...Bb7, White comes forward with the same bishop manoeuvre: 5.Be1 Bxd6 6.Qf6+ Kg8 7.exd6 Qd8, and now both 8.Bb2 and 8.Bg5 are killing.

### 5.Bc1!

The egg of Columbus. As long as the bishop on b2 is looking at the back of its own pawn, it can do nothing. But now White has finally found the solution to the problem.

### 5...Be7 6.Bg5 Bxg5

This makes things worse, but passive defence would not have helped Black either: 6...Bb7 7.Bf6+ Kg8 8.Qd3, and he cannot deal with all the threats.

### 7.hxg5 Kg8 8.Qf6 Bb7 9.Bc2

The good thing is that White has exchanged his bad bishop for Black's 'good' one, and now all he has to do is deploy his other bishop effectively on the kingside.

### 9...Ba8 10.Bb3

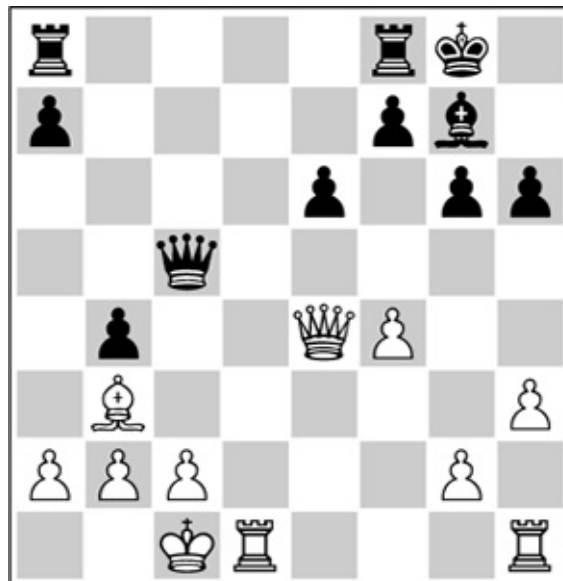
And Black resigned. The threat of Rxe6 is impossible to prevent, and that means curtains for him.

Now it is time to show a bishop that controls a splendid open diagonal. One of the clearest examples in chess history on this theme is perhaps the following.

□ Medina Garcia, Antonio

■ Botvinnik, Mikhail

Palma de Mallorca 1967 (3)



If you ask strong players to assess this position, in many cases you will get the reply 'White has an advantage'. White has neatly centralized his queen and he controls the only open file, whereas the black kingside displays several

weaknesses. In order to do justice to his strongly-placed bishop, White is ready for the march g2-g4, followed by f4-f5, enabling him to open the enemy king's position.

This assessment is completely wrong. White does not have time to make use of his open file, or his centralized queen. Moreover, the bishop on b3 finds an obstacle (the pawn block on e6/f7) on its way and is therefore not active at the moment. Of course, there are weaknesses in the black king's position, and the breaking possibility g2-g4, followed by f4-f5, could cause trouble. But there is one overpowering factor that completely refutes the assessment: the strong black bishop on g7! Black is in possession of the open diagonal a1-h8, and since the bishops are of opposite colours, White has no opponent on this diagonal that can neutralize the activity of the bishop on g7.

Also essential is the pawn on b4. If Black manages to set up a battery on the long diagonal (queen on f6 and bishop on g7), the weak point b2 cannot be protected anymore. Because of the pawn on b4 White cannot defend with c2-c3, as then ... b4xc3 follows and the white king position is blown apart.

Who would have thought this? With Black to move, the game would already be more or less over after 1...Qe7! with the threat of 2...Qf6. White's following move prevents this, but it doesn't help him either.

### **1.Rd7**

During a chess training of Dutch top juniors in the town of St Michielsgestel, two other defences for White were investigated:

A) 1.Rhe1 Qe7?! 2.g4 Qf6 3.Qe5, and White has warded off the direct threat. However, Black can do better. He should start with 1...a5, which more or less forces 2.Ba4. After 2...Qe7 3.g4 Rac8!, the white defence does not work anymore, since after, for instance, 4.Rd7 Qf6 5.Qe5 Qxe5 6.fxe5 Rc5, the e5 pawn will fall into Black's hands;

B) 1.Kb1! (well-spotted by one of the juniors) 1...Qe7 2.Qe3 Qf6 3.Qc1, and just in time White has warded off the mate threat. This is probably the least of all evils, but it goes without saying that Black has a firm grip on the initiative.

White is doomed to passivity and he has to wait and see how Black slowly builds up the pressure. This can be done with, for example, 3...a5 4.Ba4 Rad8.

1...Rad8

### **2.Rhd1?**

After this, things will go rapidly downhill. The sacrifice 2.Rxf7 is nonsense after 2...Rxf7 3.Qxe6 Rf8.

2.Rdd1 was relatively best, but then Black would again set up his battery with 2...Qe7.

**2...Rxd7 3.Rxd7 Qg1+**



#### **4.Kd2**

Here the drawbacks of White's position become apparent. 4.Rd1 would fail to 4...Bxb2+. Botvinnik now forcefully 'smokes out' the white king.

#### **4...Qf2+!**

Very precisely played. After 4...Bxb2 5.Ke2!, White could have put up a tenacious defence.

#### **5.Kd3**

Here the king feels a terrible draught.

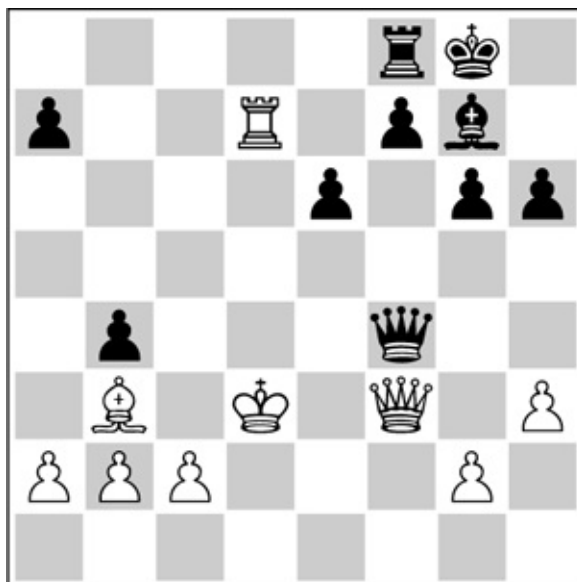
#### **5...Qf1+**

S ...Bxb2 was no mean move either.

#### **6.Qe2**

6.Kd2 Bxb2 is lethal as well.

#### **6...Qxf4 7.Qf3**



**7...Qe5**

Of course, Black does not exchange queens, as the opposite-coloured bishop ending is anything but easy to win. Now the attack rages on unabated.

**8.Qb7 a5 9.Qc6 Qxb2 10.Ke2 Qe5+ 11.KM h5 12.Rc7 Qf4+ 13.Ke2 Bd4 14.Rc8 Qe3+ 15.Kd1 Bc3 16.Rxf8+ Kxf8**

**0-1**

### **B) The bishop ‘bites on granite’**

We have talked about good and bad bishops. From the definition we have given, we know that we have a good bishop if our pawns are standing on squares of the opposite colour from the bishop. But that doesn’t always mean that this bishop can control open diagonals. The opposite side may hit upon the idea to put his own pawns on the colour of the enemy bishop as well. That way he builds a wall, as it were, which is hard to breach by the bishop side.

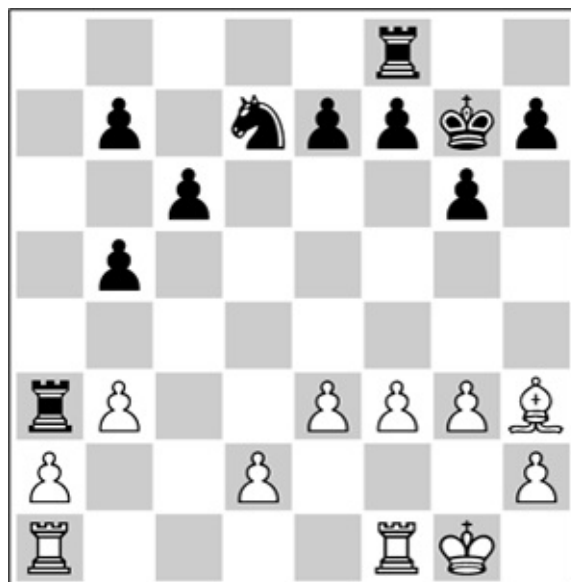
We conclude that a ‘good’ bishop may in some positions be a piece of dead wood, if it ‘bites on granite’.

In the following fragment we see a bishop that might as well have been placed beside the board.

□ **Vogel,Jaap**

■ **Grooten,Herman**

Dieren 1988



The diagram depicts a typical position where a bishop is difficult to manoeuvre. Black's pawns are on light squares, the colour of the bishop – hampering its mobility. The rock-hard granite does not offer him a single target and he is stuck with a 'dead piece'. The knight, on the other hand, can move about freely and can be deployed everywhere on the board.

**1...e6!**

Black puts a pawn on the colour of the bishop so that it now 'bites on even harder granite'.

**2.d4**

The most tenacious defence was 2.Rfb1, but after 2...Rfa8 3.Rb2 Nc5, Black would win at least a pawn.

**2...Rfa8 3.d5**

White could not avoid the loss of the pawn, and so he tries to overcome his problems by violent means. The end is swift and painless.

**3...cxd5 4.Rfc1 Ne5 5.Rc7 Nxf3+ 6.Kf2 Ng5**

**0-1**

An opening that is popular with grandmasters is the Nimzo-Indian Defence. Here, very interesting positions arise, because in many variations Black exchanges his b4 bishop for the knight on c3. The principal idea is to saddle White with a 'frozen' doubled pawn on the c-file.

Then the discussion focuses on the question of whether the black knights match up to (or even outweigh) the white bishop pair.

Everything depends on the question if White can open the position, which would enable him to make optimum use of his bishops, or if Black can keep the position closed, which would enable his knights to excel.

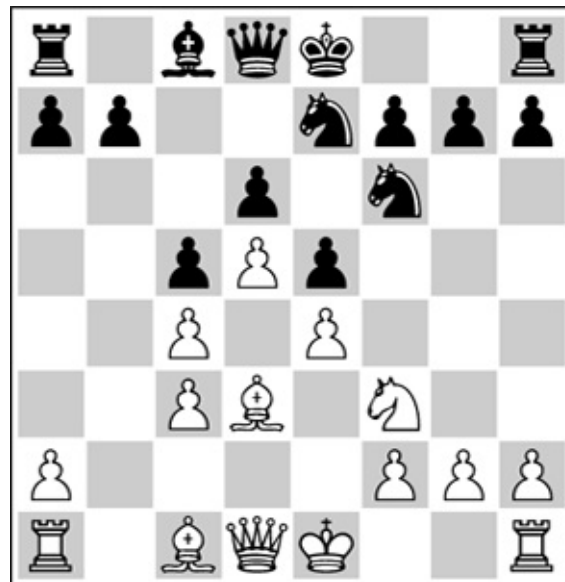


An essential question is whether White can succeed in activating his dark-squared bishop, because it is exactly this bishop that Black will be lacking.

□ **Donner, Jan Hein**

■ **Grooten, Herman**

Leeuwarden ch-NED 1981 (1)



### 1.Nh4 h6

In the tournament book of the Dutch Championship 1981, the famous Dutch grandmaster Jan Hein Donner discusses the problems of this type of position. In his comments, he speaks of the 'brown-squared bishop' which needs to be activated. If White succeeds in doing this, his position is overwhelming; if he doesn't, Black has comfortable play, he preaches.

In former times, White was considered to be in good shape here. He has more space, he possesses the bishop pair and he is the only one controlling an open file. Players like Spas sky, Portisch and Gligoric had great trust in the possibilities offered by the white position. Strategists like Karpov, Timman, Andersson and Hubner did not agree. They saw more possibilities for the manoeuvring black knights in this closed position.

In the diagram we can see what Black is trying to accomplish in this position. He has fixed the doubled pawns on c3/c4. Moreover, he has put his pawns on dark squares, bringing the Bc8 to life and restricting both white bishops.

### 2.g3

In a famous game from the World Championship match Spassky-Fischer,

Reykjavik 1972, the principled 2.f4 followed, with which White intended to break the dark-squared pawn chain. Fischer replied with the brilliant 2...Ng6!, managing to keep the static structure intact. (White's idea was 2...exf4 3.Bxf4 g5 4.e5!.) 3.Nxg6 (3.Nf5 is not good in view of 3...Bxf5 4.exf5 Nxf4, and Black is left with a fantastic knight against a bad bishop) 3...fxg6. Black soon gained an advantage and won, partly thanks to an ugly blunder by the white player.

**2...g5 3.Ng2 Bh3 4.Ne3 Qd7 5.f3 0-0-0**

Black has prevented White's important push f3-f4, and thus, White's play is largely restrained. Black's chances are certainly not worse.

For this reason, in many cases it is important for Black to try and block the position by putting as many of his pawns as possible on dark squares. This entails certain advantages. For example, he causes White's potentially dangerous dark-squared bishop to 'bite on granite', and at the same time he activates his own bishop by removing the pawns from the light squares.

In the following game Timman succeeds in illustrating why in such a structure a knight is sometimes to be preferred to a bishop.

□ **Pinter,Jozsef**

■ **Timman,Jan**

Las Palmas izt 1982 (3)

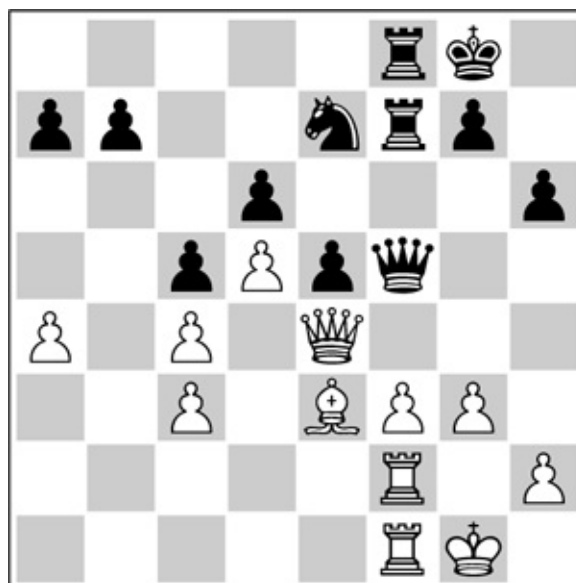
In this position, as compensation for his doubled pawn, White has the bishop pair. With his next move Black takes it from him, and at the same time he has another aim.



**1...Bf5!**

At first glance, it is strange that Black is prepared to trade his good bishop for White's bad one. But the point of Black's move will become apparent later on.

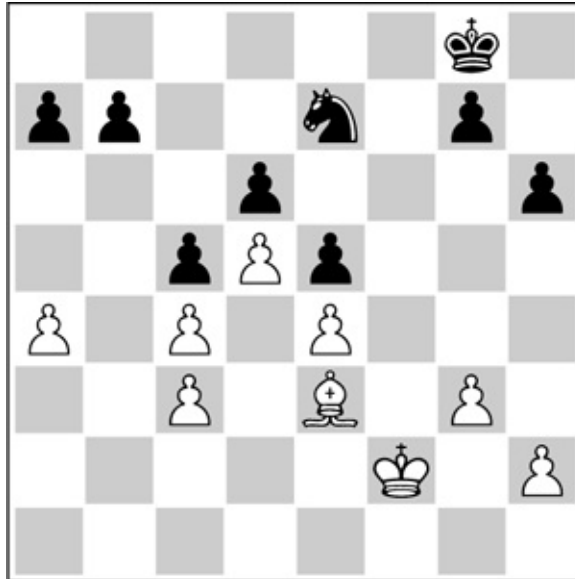
**2.Qc2 Raf8 3.Ref1 Bxe4 4.Qxe4 Qf5 5.a4?**



White's position was already bad, but after the text move it is immediately lost. Although White has kept his good bishop, the knight will emerge triumphant from the battle. Because of the closed character of the position, and due to the fact that Black has fixed as many white pawns as possible on light squares, the bishop is biting on granite. It cannot be activated in any way, while the pawns on the light squares are easy targets for the knight. That was the reason why Black didn't mind the light-squared bishops being exchanged! In the further course of

the game, everything will become clear.

**5...Qxe4 6.fxe4 Rxf2 7.Rxf2 Rxf2 8.Kxf2**

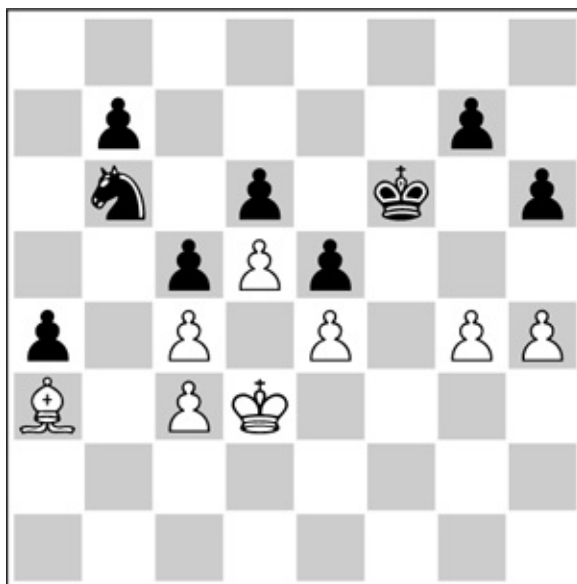


**8...a5!**

‘Well, that’s that’, Timman must have thought here. With the text move, he fixes yet another pawn on a light square, so that it can be gobbled up by the knight within three moves.

The diagram position also illustrates the powerlessness of the bishop, which has nothing to say with a pawn structure like this. The technical phase will not be difficult. Black just needs to take care that the bishop cannot invade anywhere. Then the knight and the king will take care of the rest.

**9.Ke2 Nc8 10.Kd3 Nb6 11.h4 Nxa4 12.Bc1 Nb6 13.g4 Kf7 14.Bd2 a4 15.Bc1 Kf6 16.Ba3**



**16...g5!**

Another accurate move. The bishop will now be buried alive after White's forced reply.

**17.h5 Ke7 18.Bc1 Nd7 19.Ke2 Nf6**

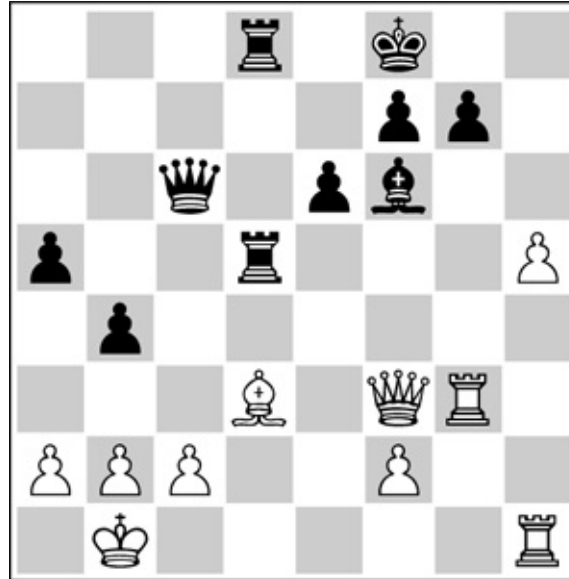
The knight quickly returns to the kingside, not only to attack the pawns on e4 and g4, but also to render possible piece sacrifices on g5 harmless.

**20.Kf3 Kd7**

Here White gave up the fight. The king will enter the queenside unhindered.

## Exercises

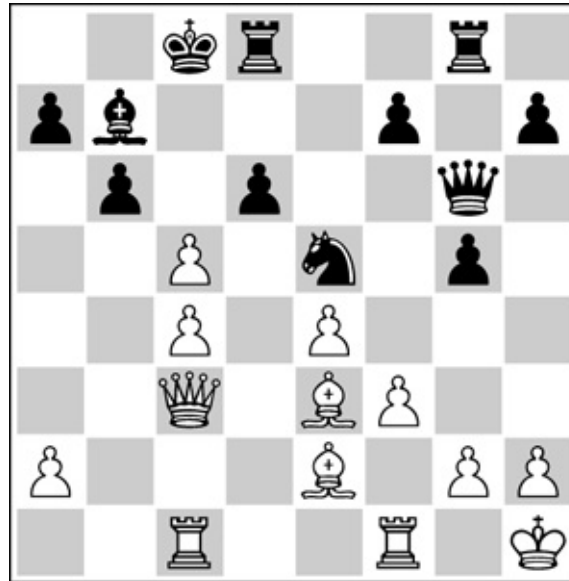
12.1



What is the best plan for Black in this position? And with what multifunctional move can he achieve this aim? Remember the analogy with the example from Medina-Botvinnik.

[Solution](#)

12.2



With his last move, **18.bxc5**, White thinks he has time for a pawn exchange. But he will be rudely awakened. How does Black manage to make his bishop on b7 the star of the show? Black to move.

[Solution](#)

12.3



From the examples we have discussed, we know that in the diagram position White should have the advantage. The chief factor in this type of endgame is that there are pawns on both wings, which makes the bishop stronger than the knight. How does White cash in on his advantage? Indicate the plan. White to move.

[Solution](#)



12.4



Black has sacrificed a pawn. In exchange he has a strong bishop and actively placed pieces. Is the time ripe for a combination? Black to move.

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 13

### Quiz: strong square

#### 13.1 Introduction

In this book we have frequently talked about strong squares. Almost in every game these can play an important role. A strong square for one player will be a weak (or vulnerable) one for the other. Precisely on such squares, pieces may find the employment they are searching for.

#### 13.2 Quiz

You learn to play chess by doing it yourself In this chapter we focus on an exercise with the theme ‘creating and exploiting a strong square’. I’d like to offer you a game where you can try to make difficult strategic decisions yourself with the help of a game of question and answer.

To test yourself, it’s best if you cover the text with a piece of paper. You can slowly move it downwards until you encounter a grey bar, in which you are asked to predict the next move. Under each bar you will find a question, sometimes a multiple-choice one. You can look at the detailed solution with the accompanying explanations directly after it. Have fun!

☐ **Botvinnik, Mikhail**

☒ **Donner, Jan Hein**

Amsterdam 1963 (4) Model game Quiz

**1.c4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.g3 d5 4.Bg2 Be7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 b6 7.Bb2 Bb7 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.d4 c5?!**

Perhaps a little premature. It was more logical to first complete development with 9...Nd7.



**Question 1:** What is White's best reaction to Black's last move?

**10.dxc5!**

Answer to Question 1:

This is White's best reaction. This exchange will cause Black to lose some time, as now he will have to make two moves with his king's bishop. Although all the centre pawns have been traded off, and thus a completely symmetrical pawn structure has been created, White will enjoy a slight lead in development.

**10...Bxc5**

With 10...bxc5 11.Nbd2, Black would saddle himself with an ugly weakness on c5. Also after 10...Bf6 11.Bxf6 Qxf6 12.Nbd2 Nc3 13.Qe1 bxc5 14.Nc4, the weakness on c5 will make Black suffer in the near future.

**11.Nbd2 Nd7 12.a3 N5f6**

12...a5 should have been preferred, in order to maintain his bishop on c5 in any event.

**13.b4 Be7**



**Question 2:** What is White's most promising plan? Choose from:

- A) 14.Qb3
- B) 14.Re1
- C) 14.Nd4
- D) 14.Rc1

### 14.Nd4!

Answer to Question 2:

C) is the right concept. It is not so obvious to allow the exchange of the light-squared bishops. In general, this will help Black, certainly if the queen can take up the position of the bishop on b7. However, Botvinnik has very cleverly assessed that in this instance, the exchange will work in his favour. We will find out the reason for this later.

A) 14.Qb3 is a logical move to connect the rooks, but its major downside is that Black can drive away the queen with 14...Bd5, and it will have no good square available.

D) 14.Rc1 is a perfectly normal move, but it hardly helps White. As Black has slightly less space, it will be pleasant for him if he can exchange rooks. After 14...Rc8, followed by ...Rxc1, ...Qd8-a8 and ...Rf8-c8, Black can neutralize the pressure.

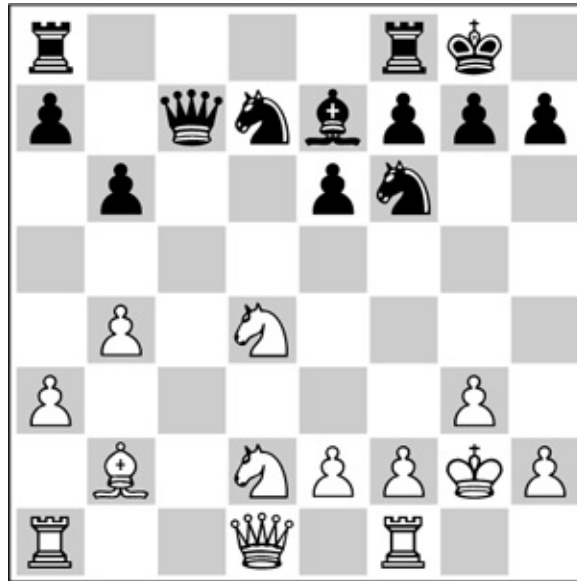
B) The intention of 14.Re1 is to further increase White's space advantage with e2-e4. This is an interesting possibility. However, with 14...a5! Black can attack White's strong point b4, after which White's advantage seems to evaporate.

### 14...Bxg2

After 14...Nd5 15.e4 Nxf6 16.e5! Nd5 (16...Bxg2 17.exf6!) 17.Nc4 Rc8 18.Rc1, White would also have gained the upper hand.

### 15.Kxg2 Qc7

Attacking with 15...a5 would not have the desired effect. After 16.Nc6 Qe8 17.Nc4, White is clearly better.



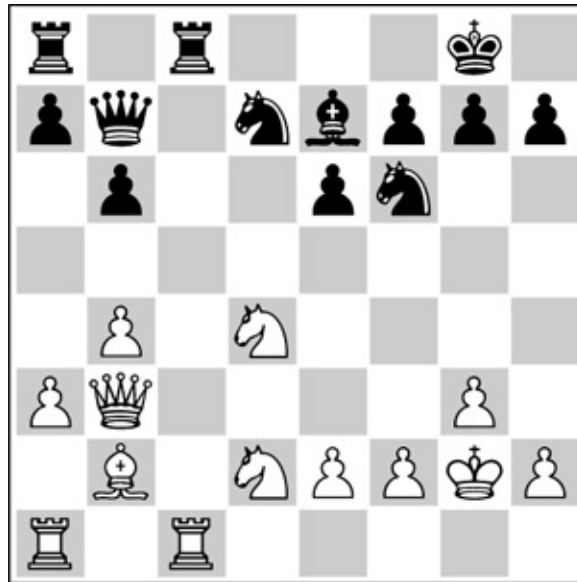
**Question 3:** How should White continue now?

### 16.Qb3

Answer to Question 3:

Now the queen does find a good square on b3, as the harassing ...Bd5 is not on here. Also, the queen strives for the square f3, where it eyes the beautiful square c6.

**16...Rfc8 17.Rfc1 Qb7+**



**Question 4:** What is the logical consequence of the idea White had on his 14th move?

Choose from:

- A) 18.Qf3
- B) 18.f3
- C) 18.e4
- D) 18.Kg1

**18.Qf3!**

Answer to Question 4:

A) is the correct answer. It is curious that White also offers to exchange queens. His most important motive is that after this swap he will definitively conquer the c6-square for the knight, getting a firm grip on the position. The other moves do not meet this demand, and therefore we should dismiss them.

**18...Nd5**

Black does not cooperate, but now he has to make further concessions.

**19.e4**

An enormous blunder would have been 19.b5??. After 19...Ne5! 20.Qe4 f5, the queen cannot be maintained on the long diagonal, and Black will have a devastating discovered check: 21.Qxe5 Ne3+.

**19...N5f6**



**Question 5:** How can White increase his advantage?

**20.b5!**

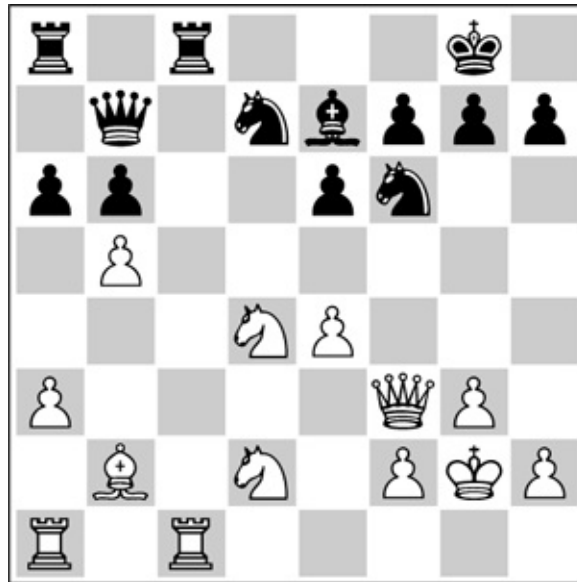
Answer to Question 5:

An important moment in the game. White finally decides to fix the c6-square, on which he has focused all this time. He leaves the c5-square to his opponent. A few variations in the following will prove that the possession of the c6-square is more important than that of the c5-square.

**20...a6**

After 20...Rxc1 21.Rxc1 Rc8 22.Nc6! Bc5 23.Nc4, White has a large advantage. In this position he will continue with Rd 1, after which he can try and enter via the d6-square.

Here, 20...Ne5 (!) would have been relatively the best defence. After 21.Qe2 Rxc1 22.Rxc1 Rc8 23.Rxc8+ Qxc8 24.f4 Ned7 25.Nc6 Bf8 26.Nc4 (this move is better than 26.Nxa7, since in that case Black could develop counterplay with 26...Qc2), White maintains the initiative, even though Black has done well by exchanging all the rooks.



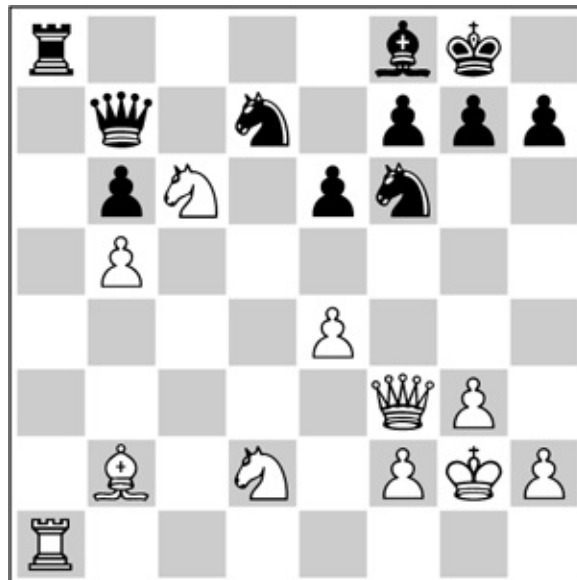
**Question 6:** What is White's best move now?

**21.Nc6**

Answer to Question 6:

Before Black can swap a rook, White plays his knight to the strong square c6 as quickly as possible. There the knight will stir up heaps of trouble in the black ranks.

**21...Bf8 22.a4 axb5 23.axb5 Rxa1 24.Rxa1 Ra8**



**Question 7:** What is wise here?

A) White exchanges himself with 25.Rxa8.



- B) White allows the exchange with 25.Nc4.
- C) White doesn't exchange and continues with 25. Rd 1.
- D) White doesn't exchange and continues with 25. Rc1.

### 25.Rd1!

Answer to Question 7:

C) is the right answer. The move played is quite deep. Botvinnik realizes that Black cannot do much with the open a-file, and that it is helpful for him to keep a pair of rooks on the board, so that he can derive the maximum profit from his beautiful knight on c6. The best square for the rook is d1, since White can run most of his operations along the d-file.

### 25...Ne8?!

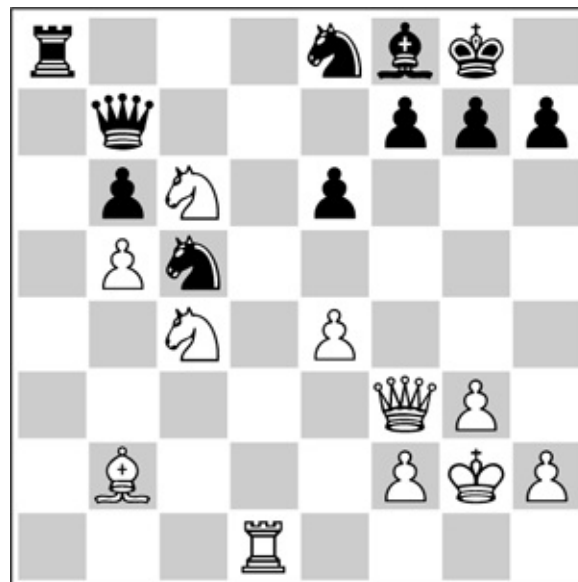
For Black it is quite difficult to defend himself, but with his last move Donner simplifies White's task. After a 'half-move' like 25...Qc8, White would still have to determine how to make progress.

### 26.Nc4

Even stronger was 26.e5, since White could then work with some direct threats. For example, Black must seriously reckon with the possibility of Ne7+.

### 26...Nc5

Perhaps it would have been better for Black to admit his mistake and play 26...Nef6, although this would not have been without consequences either.



**Question 8:** How does White drive his opponent further into the corner?

## 27.e5!

Answer to Question 8:

Now Botvinnik does play this! Since Black cannot immediately establish a knight on d5, White can play the pawn to e5, further restricting Black. What's more, Nd6 now becomes a realistic possibility, after which White would be able to work with a dangerous passed pawn. Finally, the position now contains several tactical tricks, which will soon become decisive.

### Question 9:

In this position, Black has various possibilities. Work out a few variations after the following options:

- A) 27...Nc7
- B) 27...Ra2
- C) 27...Ra4
- D) 27...Rc8

## 27...Rc8

Answer to Question 9:

A) After 27...Nc7, White has an attractive combination that yields him the win: 28.Rd7! Nxd7 29.Ne7+Bxe7 30.Qxb7;

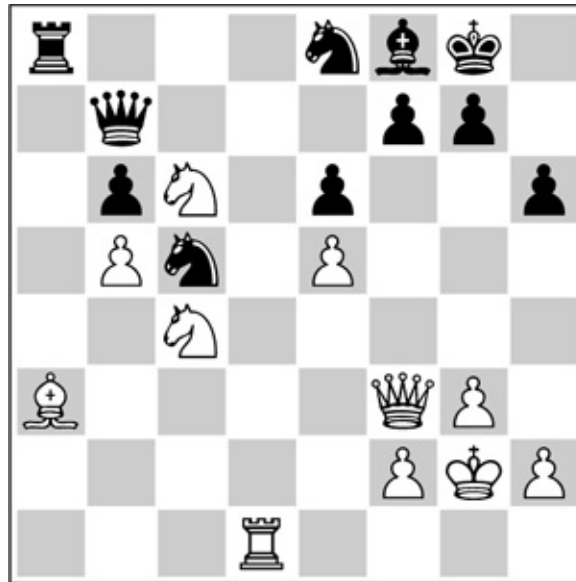
B) The downside to 27...Ra2 is that the weakness of Black's back rank becomes a big problem: 28.Rd8, and now 28...Ra8 (28...Nc7 29.Rd7!) fails to 29.Rxa8 Qxa8 30.Ne7+Bxe7 31.Qxa8;

C) 27...Ra4 28.Nd6 Nxd6 29.exd6 Qd7 30.Ne5, and White's passed pawn, combined with the threat of Qxf7, decide the battle.

After a 'half-move' like **27...h6** it is difficult to make out what exactly White should do:

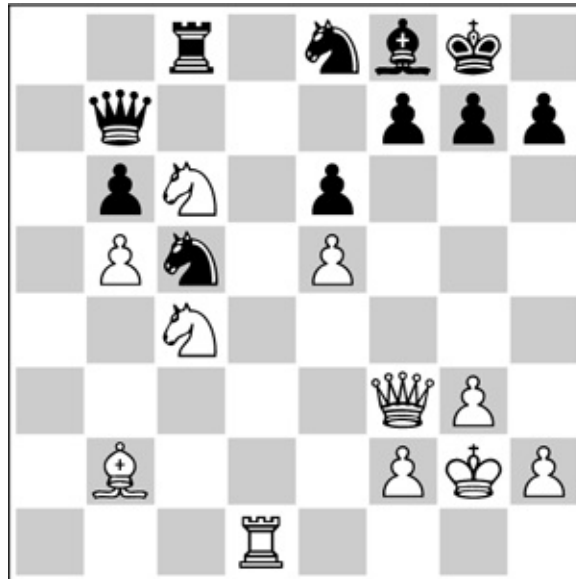
1) It seems logical to work with an action like 28.Nd6, but after 28...Bxd6 29.exd6 Kf8!, Black will hold for now;

2) Since the knight on c5 is the most important defender, we now know how White should go about this: 28.Ba3!



Analysis diagram

In this way, White will later attack the cornerstone of Black's defence.  
 On 28...Ra4, 29.Bxc5 wins: 29...bxc5 (not 29...Bxc5 30.Rd8 Kf8 in view of 31.Nd6 Bxd6 32.exd6, and White wins) 30.Nd6 Bxd6 31.exd6, and now the double threat of d6-d7 and Nc6-e7+ ends it all, since 31...Qd7 fails to 32.Ne5.



**Question 10:** What is White's best move?

**28.Ra1!**

Answer to Question 10: Flexible thinking characterizes the greatest players. Now that Black has removed his rook from the a-file, Botvinnik gratefully

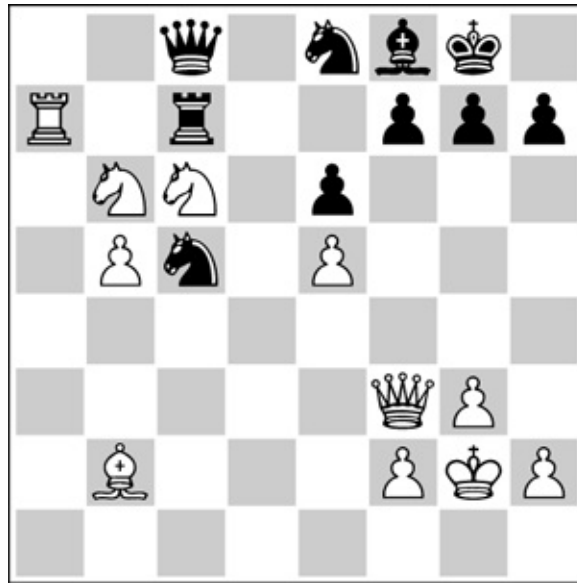
makes use of this.

### **28...Rc7**

No solution is offered by 28...Qc7 29.Ra7, as after 29...Nb7, White must direct his attention to the weak point b6. He does this as follows: 30.Bd4 Bc5 31.Bxc5 bxc5, and now 32.N4a5 wins.

### **29.Ra7Qxa7**

The position after 29...Qc8 30.Nxb6 is beautiful.



Analysis diagram

An artistic queen catch.

### **30.Nxa7 Rxa7 31.Nxb6**

And Black resigned.

## Chapter 14

# The open file

### 14.1 Introduction

It is not surprising that open files play an important role in chess games. In order to pose threats to the opponent we would like to enter his position with our pieces. An open file always has a connection with a certain rank. Especially the ranks on enemy territory are of paramount importance. That is why in Chapter 16 we will look at the sixth, seventh and eighth rank, to see what can be gained there if our pieces have invaded. It is almost superfluous to observe that the patterns that are valid for open diagonals and ranks, also apply to open files. The diagonal we have, of course, discussed with the bishop. With the open file it is logical to discuss the rook separately, since the characteristics of the rook are essentially different from those of the bishop. Whereas a bishop can only reach half of the squares, a rook can go anywhere.

Otherwise, just like the bishop, the rook may be hindered by obstacles in front of it, and it works well on an open file. Another point is that the bishop often supports certain actions from a distance, whereas the rook fulfils a more active role. After all, an important given is that as soon as the rook has conquered a file, it very much wants to move forward and penetrate the enemy lines. In the next sections we will look at the following aspects:

### 14.2 Conquering an open file

### 14.3 Undermining an obstacle

### 14.4 Exploiting an open file

### 14.2 Conquering an open file

If a white and a black rook are on the same open file, a field of tension is created between both rooks. This field of tension can be quickly neutralized if all the heavy pieces are exchanged on this file. Then the open file is no longer of interest. It is more interesting if a struggle breaks out where both players dispute the presence of each other's rooks on the file. In practice we dispose of various methods to conquer a file. I shall restrict myself to giving one typical diagram per method. Below is the scheme containing the different battle methods:

#### A) The file is open

**A1) Driving away the defenders**

**A2) Making use of a foothold**

**A3) Temporarily closing off a file by one's own piece, with the intention to double (or triple) behind it.**

**B) The file is (as yet) closed**

**B1) Doubling (or tripling) and then threatening to open the file**

**B2) Making use of a target for an attack on the king.**

**A) The file is open**

A well-known issue in the middlegame is the question where we should put our rooks. The minor pieces have been developed, the king has castled into safety, and now the rooks must be brought into play. If the rooks are on an open file, the aim is mostly to enter via the seventh rank.

**A1) Driving away the defenders**

In order to conquer the seventh rank, we want to create a point of entry. For that purpose, we try to remove the defenders of that point.

□ **Botvinnik, Mikhail**

■ **Boleslavsky, Isaak**

Moscow ch-URS 1945 (11)



In this position it is not yet conceivable how White could enter on the seventh rank. The d7-point is well covered, but Botvinnik starts by systematically eliminating several defenders.

### 1.Bb3! Rxd2

Surrendering the d-file, but after 1...Bxb3 2.axb3 White will also take control. Black cannot prevent White from taking possession of the d-file with Ne3-c4, followed by Rd2-d3.

### 2.Qxd2



### 2...Bxb3?!

Much more tenacious resistance could have been put up with the mysterious move 2...Rc8!. The most important purpose of this rook move is to open a passage for the king to the centre via f8. Now it is not clear if White can actually take profit from the open d-file: 3.Qd6 Qxd6 4.Rxd6 Bxb3 5.axb3 Kf8 6.c4 Ke7, and Black is just in time to prevent the invasion of the rook on the seventh rank.

### 3.axb3 Qe6

Now 3...Rc8 does not have the same effect. After 4.c4 Rc7 5.Qd8+ Qxd8 6.Rxd8+ Kh7 White has accomplished a great deal: 7.c5 Nd7 8.Nc4, and Black is in big trouble.

### 4.c4

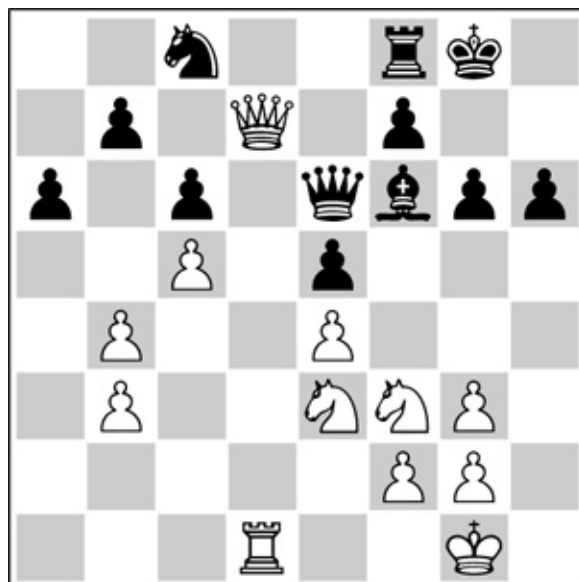
White proceeds purposefully. The black knight is the next defender that must be chased away.

### 4...Bf6 5.c5

Right on time, as Black was ready for 5...Rd8. Now this would meet with 6.Qxd8+ Bxd8 7.Rxd8+ Kg7 8.cxb6.

### 5...Nc8 6.Qd7

The aim is achieved! White has created a point of entry and will now have a field day on the seventh rank.



### 6...Qxb3

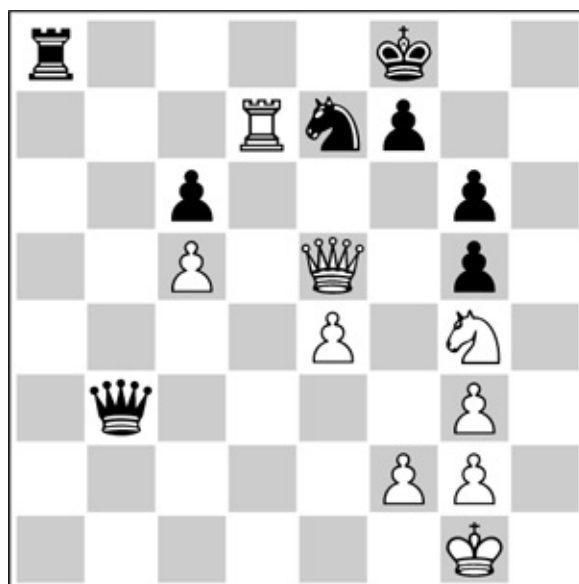
Also after 6...Rd8 7.Qxb7 Rxd1+ 8.Nxd1 Ne7 9.Ne3 Qxb3 10.Ng4, White will win at least a pawn.

### 7.Qxb7 Bg5

The position is highly problematic for Black. Also after 7...Ne7 8.Rd7 Re8 9.Ng4 Qe6 10.Nxf6+ Qxf6 11.Rd6 Qg7 12.Qxa6, he will not be able to hold.

**8.Nxg5 hxg5 9.Qxa6 Ne7 10.Qb7 Re8 11.Qd7 Kf8 12.Qd6 Qxb4 13.Ng4 Ra8 14.Qxe5 Qb3 15.Rd7**

Not only has White won a pawn, he has also put his pieces on the right places for a final offensive.



**15...Ng8 16.Qd6+ Kg7 17.Qd4+ Kh7 18.Nf6+ Nxf6 19.Qxf6 Kg8 20.Kh2 Rf8**



21.Qxc6 Kg7 22.Qd5 Qb1 23.Qd4+Kh7 24.c6

1-0

## A 2) Making use of a foothold

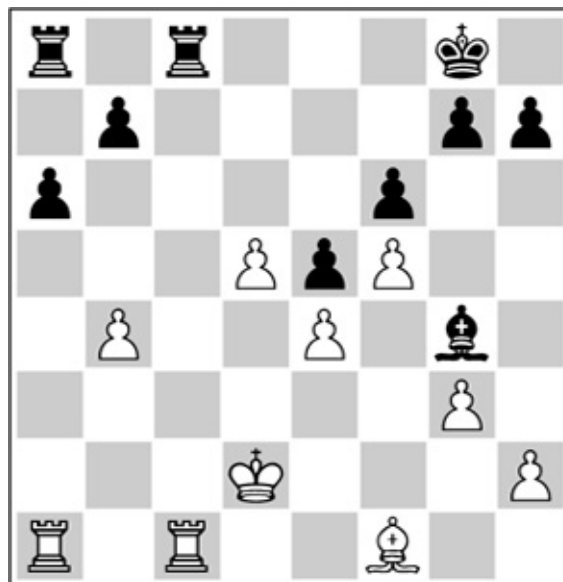
We call a square on an open file that is protected by an own pawn a ‘foothold’. This foothold can be used to enforce a doubling of rooks. Earlier in this book we mentioned the ‘springboard’. The idea is actually the same.

□ Quinteros, Miguel

■ Colombo Berra, Fernando

Omega 1990 (2)

Both players are contesting the open c-file. White has the better prospects, since he has a foothold on this file. With his next move he makes use of it.



### 1.Rc5!

The square c5 is used as a springboard for the doubling of white rooks. An exchange on c5 would give White two dangerous pawns in the centre, so Black is forced to allow the doubling of rooks.

### 1...Kf8

Obviously Black cannot attack the foothold with 1...b6, since after 2.Rxc8+ Rxc8 3.Rxa6, he loses a pawn. Please note that in that case Black is not helped in any way by the possession of the c-file, since White controls all the points of entry on the file.

### 2.Rac1 Rd8

With a heavy heart, Black must leave the c-file with his rook.

Once again, White's advantage after 2...Rxc5 3.bxc5 (in this case 3.Rxc5 would

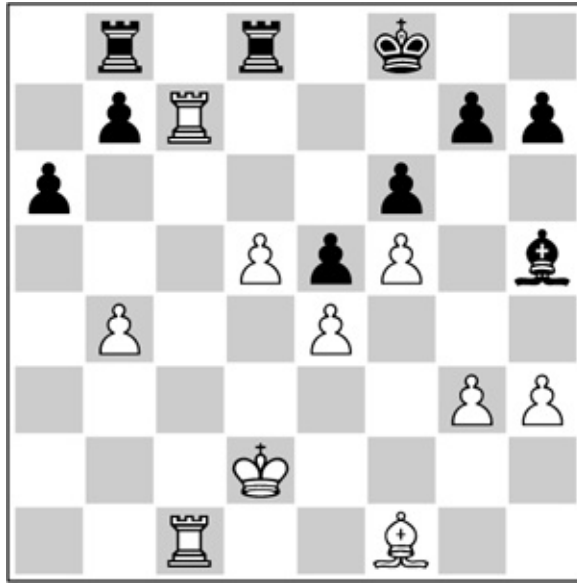
also be good) would be virtually decisive.

### 3.Rc7

The open file has been conquered, and now White invades on the seventh rank.

### 3...Rab8 4.h3 Bh5

Although White controls the only open file and has even invaded with a rook, he is not home yet. He will have to find a way to make further progress, and for that purpose new reserves must be brought up.

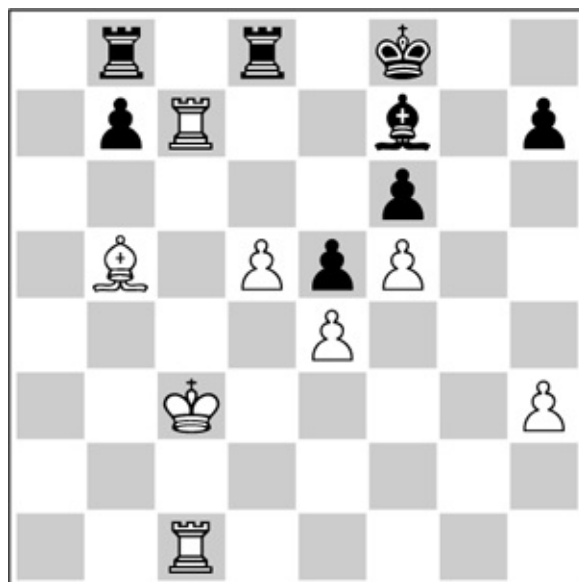


**5.b5!**

This is the right idea. White activates his bishop and plans, after an exchange on b5, to tie his opponent up completely with Bb5-d7-e6.

**5...axb5 6.Bxb5 Bf7**

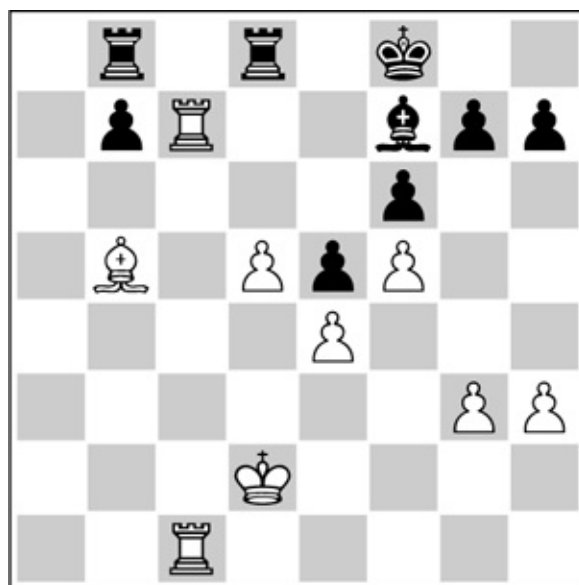
If Black tries to trade off the dominant bishop with 6...Be8, then 7.Rb1! is the most adequate answer. After 7...b6 8.g4 Bxb5 9.Rxb5 Rd6 10.Rb3, Black must allow either the loss of a pawn, or, in the end, the doubling of the white rooks on the seventh rank, with disastrous consequences.



### 7.Kc3!

An excellent preparatory move. The king will be ideally posted on the b4-square, where it keeps the black passed pawn in check, and also prevents possible invasions by the black rook along the a-file.

7...g6 8.g4 gxf5 9.gxf5



### 9...Bxd5

Black panics, realizing that he is lost, and gives up a piece. After a move like 9...Kg8, White would be allowed to pursue his plan. With the text move the black player swiftly puts himself out of his misery.

10.exd5 Rxd5 11.Bc4 Rd4 12.Rg1

1-0

### A3) Temporarily closing off a file with one's own piece, with the intention to double (or triple) behind it

In a position where one player controls more space, he has an interesting possibility to conquer a file. The following fragment makes this clear.

□ Karpov, Anatoly

■ Unzicker, Wolfgang

Niceol 1974 (3)



#### 1...Qd8

Black signals that he wants to start a dispute for the possession of the a-file by an exchange on a2, followed by ...Ra8. It is highly instructive how White prevents this plan and takes control of the a-file himself

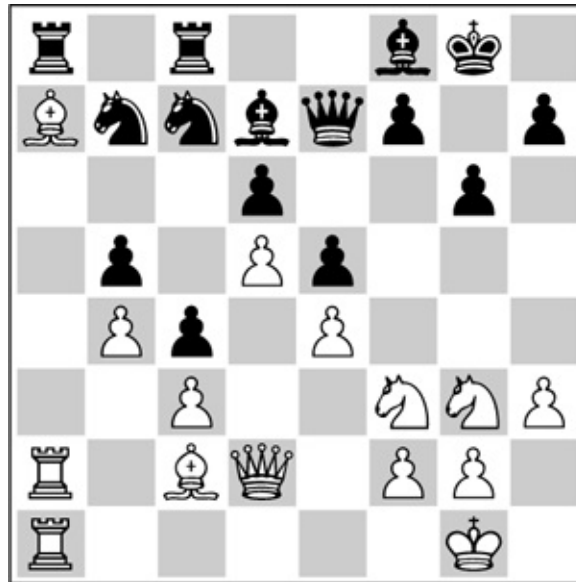
#### 2.Ba7!!

The egg of Columbus! This bishop cannot be driven away, since Black is suffering from a huge lack of space. Especially the unfortunate knight on b7 is a liability. As long as the bishop is on a7, Black will not manage to exchange rooks. White can take his time to double rooks (or triple his heavy pieces). Then he can choose the right moment to retreat his bishop, after which the a-file will be his.

#### 2...Ne8 3.Bc2

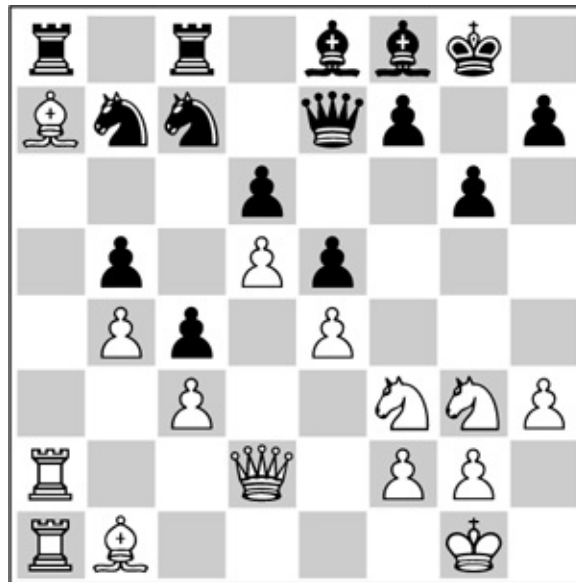
White prepares to double.

#### 3...Nc7 4.Rea1 Qe7



### 5.Bb1 Be8

The rooks have been doubled, but with just the possession of the a-file the game is not won yet. First White must try to open up a second front. Which preparations does he have to make for this?



### 6.Ne2!

Black's chronic lack of space makes him gasp for breath, and White can work on the strengthening of his position at his leisure.

The remainder of the game ('How to build on a space advantage') actually lies outside the scope of this chapter, but it is extremely instructive.

### 6...Nd8 7.Nh2 Bg7 8.f4!

White starts his operations on the king-side.

### 8...f6

Black has decided to build a 'defensive wall', which White will have to try to break down.

### 9.f5!

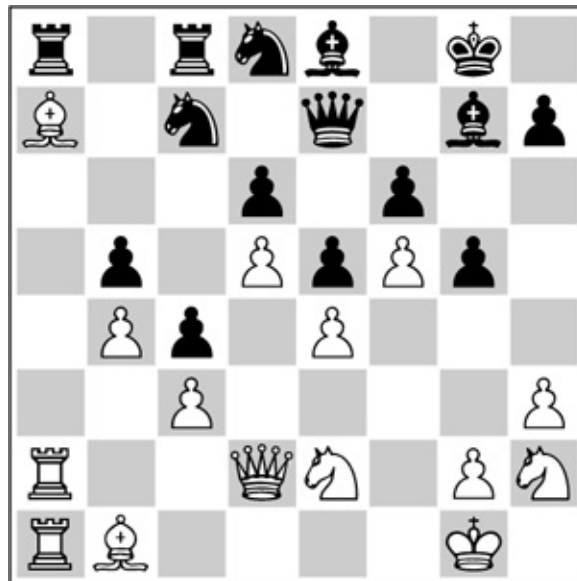
The right decision. White opts for further expansion on the kingside. White is still the one who decides when the a-file will be opened.

9.fxe5?!, for example, would have been less good. Black has less space, and with this exchange White would give him a little more elbow room.

Also 9.g4?! was less recommendable. In itself, the idea behind this move is not bad, but the timing is wrong. White is better advised to wait with this action, since after 9...exf4 10.Nxf4 Nf7 Black would suddenly be able to use the beautiful square e5 for one of his knights.

### 9...g5?!

By closing the position, Black hopes to keep the game within drawing margins. In fact, he commits a serious inaccuracy, which eases White's task. Now that the kingside is also closed, White must regroup his pieces. Our eye is caught by the square h5. His first task is to aim his pieces at that square.



### 10.Bc2!

Karpov has finely sensed that this bishop has no function on the queenside anymore, and that it is better employed on the kingside now.

### 10...Bf7 11.Ng3 Nb7

After 11...h5 12.Bd1 h4 13.Ngf1, it is questionable if White will succeed in exchanging the light-squared bishops. He can arrange a set-up with Bd1-g4, Qd2-e2, after which Bh5 is a threat. But Black will not allow this exchange that easily; he will parry the threat with ...Qe7-e8. Then, White continues with g2-

g3. This pawn must be captured, as otherwise g3xh4 follows, creating a mortal weakness. After ...h4xg3 Nf1xg3, a knight appears, which covers the h5-square one more time. After that, White can force the desired exchange with Bg4-h5. The consequences of that exchange are flawlessly demonstrated by Karpov in the game.

### 12.Bd1 h6?

With his last move, Black hasn't exactly improved things. He is making White's task very easy now.

### 13.Bh5

Thus, the light squares on the kingside are fatally weakened, enabling White to invade with several of his pieces via h5.

### 13...Qe8 14.Qd1!

Of course White keeps control of h5.

### 14...Nd8 15.Ra3

Now White directs his attention to the queenside again. If he can take possession of the a-file, in combination with possible threats on the kingside, Black, with his permanent lack of space, will be hard put to keep everything together.

### 15...Kf8 16.R1a2

White prepares a possible tripling of heavy pieces. The retreat of the Ba7 is permanently hanging over Black's head like the Sword of Damocles.

### 6...Kg8 17.Bxf7+ Nxf7



An important moment in the game. How can White increase his advantage now?

### 18.Qh5!

This way White further increases the pressure. The queen enters the black position with devastating force.

**18...Nd8 19.Qg6!**

The move with the most 'paralysing' effect. Black is completely tied up.

**19...Kf8 20.Nh5**



The last powerful move, after which Black resigned. Both the queen exchange and 20...Qe7 are met by 21.Ng4, sealing Black's fate. Please note that White still hasn't retreated his bishop from a7. But nevertheless Black has succumbed. Karpov worked according to the principle 'the threat is stronger than the execution'. Because Unzicker constantly had to reckon with a white invasion along the a-file, he was compelled to keep the anti-aircraft guns in their defensive positions. And this allowed White to take him out on the other side!

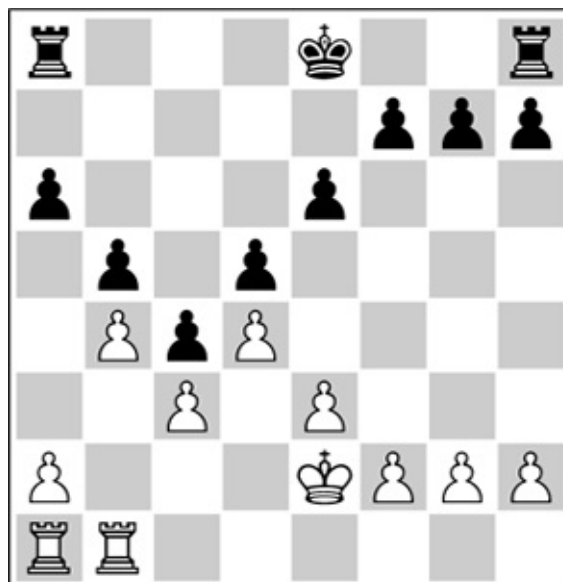
### **B) The file is (as yet) closed**

If there is a field of tension between two pawns, a file can be opened. But if a file is opened, that doesn't necessarily mean that one of the players will conquer it. We will study two different cases, where a file is conquered by means of a small trick.

#### **B1) Doubling (or tripling) and then threatening to open the file**

We have seen before that a space advantage can be a favourable factor. For instance, a player who has more space can conquer a file by doubling his rooks on a (closed) file, threatening to open it in the long run. Dr Max Euwe has worked out the following instructive example.





Strictly speaking, Black controls more space. Only on the a-file does White have more space, and he can create a field of tension between the a4 and b5 pawns. In this way, he will eventually be able to open up the a-file with a4xb5.

**1.a4 Kd7 2.Ra2!**

This is the idea behind White's manoeuvres. It made no sense to open the a-file at this point, as Black also has a rook on the a-file. By doubling first, White creates the concrete threat of a4xb5.

**2...Kc7**

Black cannot neutralize the field of tension by 2...bxa4, as then he will end up in a very unpleasant position after 3.Rxa4 Kc7 4.Rba1 Kb7 5.Ra5. The weak pawn on a6 is a source of worry, and White can invade with his rooks via the a5-square.

The following sample sequence of moves illustrates what could happen: 5...

Rhc8 6.Kf3 Rd8 7.e4 dxe4+ 8.Kxe4 Rdc8 9.Re5 (9.f4 also deserves consideration) 9...Rc6 10.Raa5 Rac8 11.d5 (White now opens the centre in order to force an entrance of his rooks into the black position) 11...exd5+ 12.Raxd5 R6c7 (12...R8c7 is a slightly more tenacious defence) 13.Kd4 Kb6 14.f4 Rc6 15.g3 R8c7 16.h4 Rc8 17.h5 R8c7 18.b5! axb5 19.Rxb5+ Ka6 20.Rbc5, and White wins the pawn on c4.

**3.Rba1 Kb7**

Just in time, Black parries the threat to open the file.

**4.Kf3**

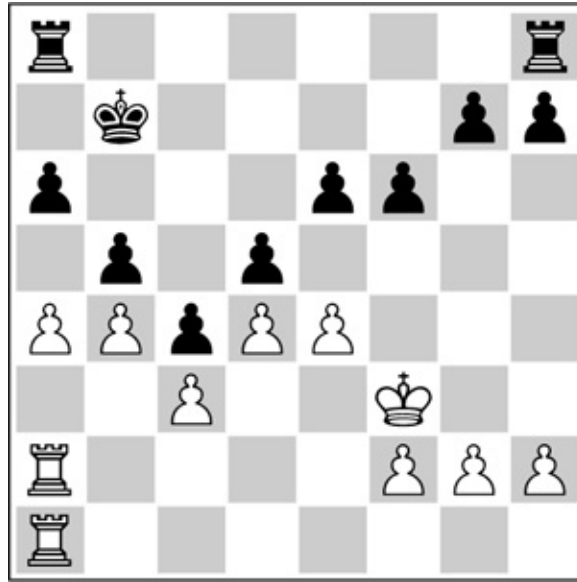
It is still too early for a liquidation to a pawn ending after 4.axb5 axb5. After 5.Rxa8 Rxa8 6.Rxa8 Kxa8, White would have no possibilities to invade with his king as yet. But 5.Ra5! would also be very strong: after 5...Rxa5 6.Rxa5 Kb6

7.Kf3, Black can do nothing, and White can follow a similar plan to the one in the game.

#### **4...f6**

Black does not want to allow the king to e5, but it will soon become apparent that this pawn move is a weakening.

#### **5.e4**



#### **5...Rhd8**

A waiting move is required, since 5...dxe4+ would not provide a solution either.

After 6.Kxe4 Rhd8 7.axb5 axb5 8.Rxa8 Rxa8 9.Rxa8 Kxa8 10.f4 Kb7 11.d5 exd5+ 12.Kxd5, the pawn ending is winning for White.

However, after the text move White also liquidates.

**6.axb5 axb5 7.Rxa8 Rxa8 8.Rxa8 Kxa8 9.exd5 exd5 10.Kf4 g6 11.g4 h6 12.h4 Kb7 13.h5!**

And Black can resign.

### **B2) Making use of a target for an attack on the king**

A weakening of the king's position can in some cases be the reason for an attack on the king. We know that in the lines with opposite castling in the Dragon Variation of the Sicilian, the white player pounces upon the pawn on g6 to open the h-file with h2-h4-h5xg6.

In the following game, the black pawn on h6 is the point of attack that brings on a crushing initiative.

☐ Kasparov, Garry

■ Dur, Arne

Graz tt 1981



Black has sacrificed a pawn on b5 and is ready for action on the queenside. With his next move White returns the favour, in order to start an attack himself.

**1.05!**

Of course, White does not lose time. He opens a file on the kingside to start the attack. The pawn on h6 is the point of attack that White needs to open a file.

## 1...hxg5

Otherwise the g-file will be opened, with even more serious consequences.

**2.hxg5 Bxg5 3.Nxg5 Qxg5 4.f4!**

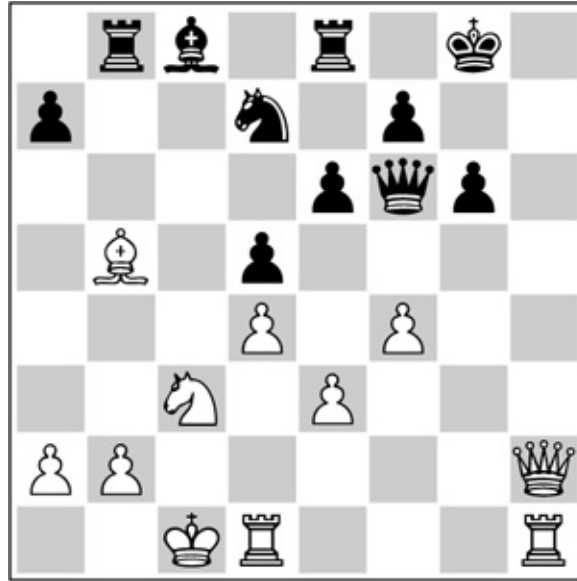
Another strong move. The second rank is opened with tempo, so that the queen can go to the h-file. At the same time the centre is fixed.

4...Qf6 5.Qh2

An important point in White's plan. The queen switch to the h-file indicates that he means business.

5...g6

An important moment. Black has managed to weather the first storm. Now White must pour new fuel onto his attack. This he does with



**6.f5!**

Now that the black king is feeling the draught, White tries to create more breaches in the defensive lines.

**6...Qg7**

The alternatives are not great: 6...gxf5 7.Rdg1+ Kf8 8.Qd6+ Re7 9.Nxd5 exd5 10.Qxf6 Nxf6 11.Rh8+ Ng8 12.Rgxf6#; or 6...exf5 7.Qh7+ Kf8 8.Nxd5 Qg7 9.Qh8+ Qxh8 (9...Qg8 also loses to 10.Bxd7 Bxd7 11.Qf6 Re6 12.Rh8 Rxf6 13.Rxg8+ Kxg8 14.Nxf6+) 10.Rxh8+ Kg7 11.Rxe8, and Black loses a decisive amount of material.

**7.fxe6 fxe6 8.Rdg1**

The g-file has become interesting for the other white rook.

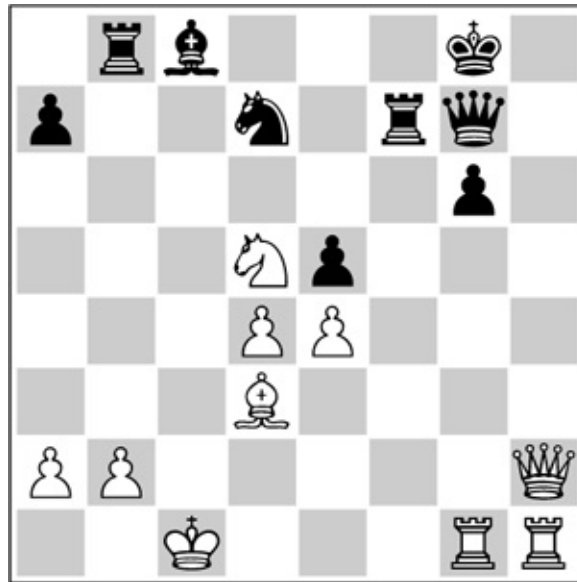
**8...Rf8 9.Bd3**

Kasparov aims at the weak point g6.

**9...Rf6 10.e4!**

Now White breaks open the centre, and this brings about the decision.

**10...e5 11.Nxd5 Rf7**



**12.Rxg6!**

**1-0**

It's always nice to see a player being 'h-filed'.

### **14.3 Undermining an obstacle**

Just like a bishop (on a diagonal), a rook can sometimes 'bite on granite' (on a half-open file). A rook on a half-open file is hindered by a well-protected enemy pawn. This obstacle prevents the rook from invading on the seventh rank. We distinguish two methods to attack such an obstacle on an open file.

**A) 'Corroding the granite'**

**B) Provoking a weakness and ma-noeuvering against it**

**A) 'Corroding the granite'**

A piece of granite must be destroyed by one of our own pawns. This undermining action is necessary to eliminate the obstacle, or weaken it. The following game demonstrates how this works.

□ **Van den Berg, Carel**

■ **Kramer, Haije**

Amsterdam 1950 (IS)



This is a characteristic position from the Exchange Variation of the Queen's Gambit. White's field of activity is the half-open c-file, whereas Black's is the half-open e-file. Putting a rook on c1 makes little sense at this point. What use is the c-file to White if his pieces will stumble on the granite block on c6? The following move is the introduction to the correct plan.

### **1.Rab1!**

The start of a so-called 'minority attack'. White prepares the b2-b4 push in order to 'corrode' the c6-point later with b4-b5. Because he starts action with three pawns against four on this flank, we use the term 'minority attack' here.

### **L...g6**

Black can try to slow down the white action with 1...a5, but this won't make any difference if White continues with 2.a3.

### **2.b4 a6 3.a4 Ne6 4.Bh4 Ng7**

The defensive plan that Black chooses is to try and exchange his bad bishop on c8 for White's good one on d3. But we will soon see that this plan has its drawbacks.

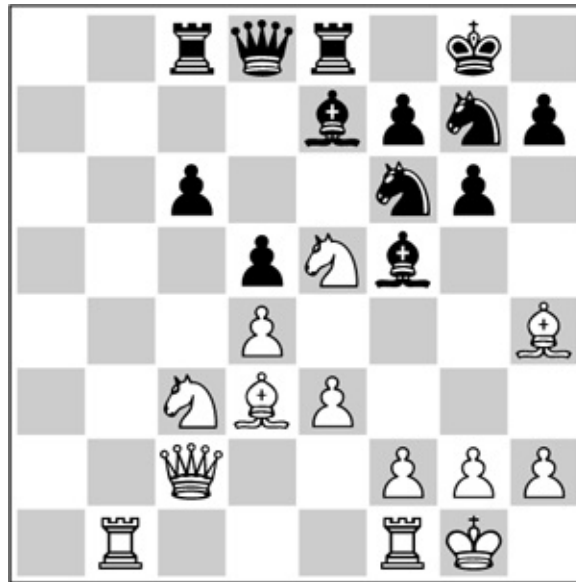
### **5.b5!**

The white action has developed quite quickly, since Black has invested much energy in preparing to exchange his bad bishop.

### **5...axb5 6.axb5 Bf5**

Black has carried out his plan, but in the meantime the pawn on c6 has become an easy target.

### **7.bxc6 bxc6 8.Ne5 Rc8**



### 9.Rb7

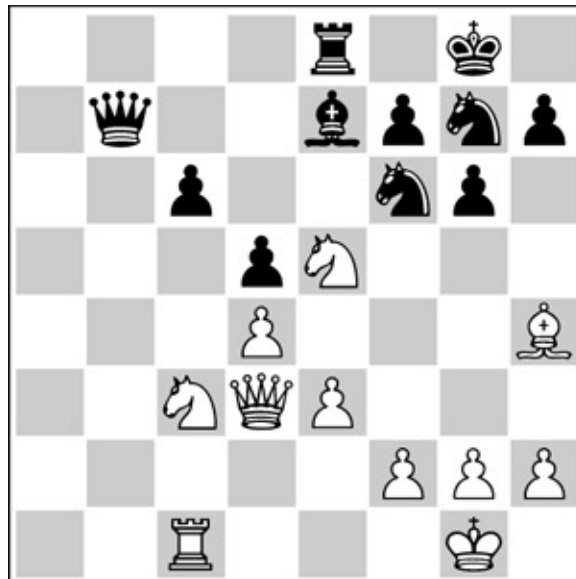
An important secondary effect of his plan is that White now invades on the seventh rank with his rook.

### 9...Bxd3 10.Qxd3 Rc7 11.Rxc7 Qxc7 12.Rc1!

Now that the pawn on c6 has been severely weakened, White puts a rook on the half-open c-file.

### 12...Qb7

Black couldn't get rid of his weakness tactically with 12...c5 (with the idea 13.dxc5?? Qxe5), since after 13.Bxf6 Bxf6 14.Nxd5, he is hoist with his own petard.



### 13.Qb1!

A strong move. After the queen exchange, the weakness on c6 will be felt even more strongly.

**13...Qa6**

Out of sheer necessity Black steps aside, but his pieces are not good anymore.

**14.Na2!?**

In fact this is decisive. The main threat is 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Nb4. In the game there followed:

**14...Ra8**

Also after 14...Rc8 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Nb4 Qb7 17.Nexc6, White would have gained a valuable pawn.

**15.Nb4?**

With 15.Nxc6! White could have cashed in a pawn, after which the resistance would soon have been broken.

**15...Bxb4 16.Qxb4 Ne4**

This also led to a white advantage, but it was converted into a full point only after a tough fight.

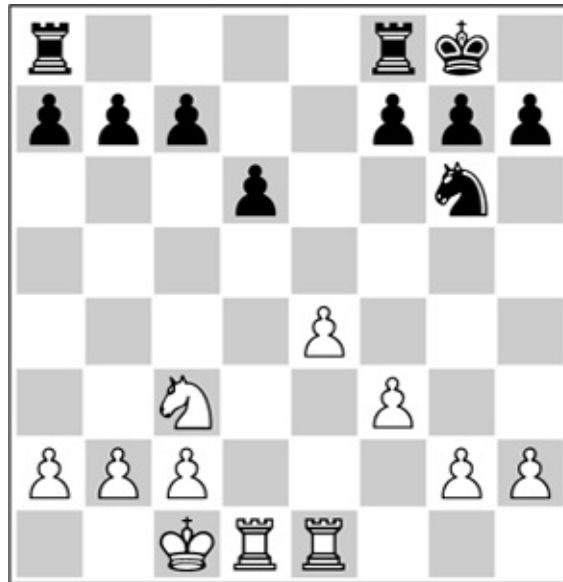
### **B) Provoking a weakness and manoeuvring against it**

In the previous example we saw that the black pawns on c6 and b7 constitute a strong block against a white rook on c1. By pushing his b-pawn White managed to 'corrode' the obstacle. There is yet another method to undermine such a strong point.

### **B1) Outpost**

In *My System*, Nimzowitsch's unsurpassed book, a section is devoted to the notions of 'outpost' and 'outpost square'. A diagram should explain a lot.





The teacher defines the ‘outpost square’ as a square that has to fulfil the following conditions:

- The square is situated on a half-open file, preferably in the centre, and close to the enemy lines.
- There is preferably a rook on the half-open file.
- The square is protected by our own pawn.
- On the square a piece (mostly a knight) is placed, which has an undermining effect on the enemy position.

In the diagram, d5 is the ‘outpost square’.

### 1.Nd5

Logical; this knight will make trouble in the black camp. It provokes a weakness.

### 1...c6

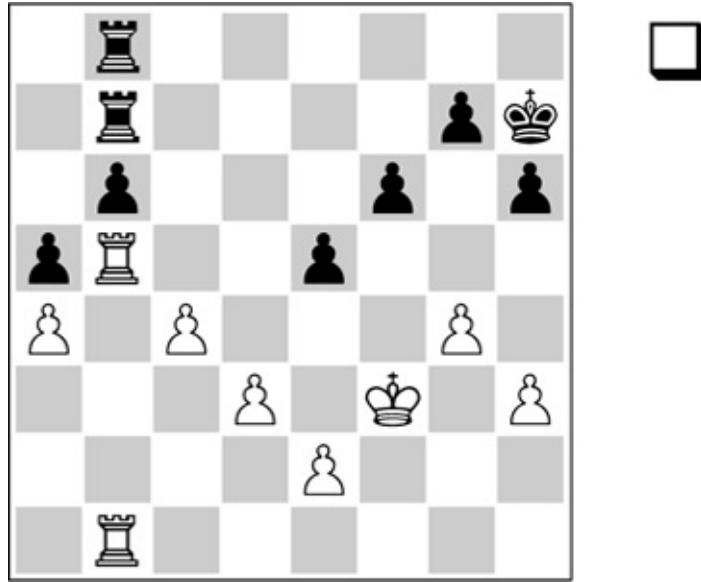
Black falls for it, and in so doing he more or less voluntarily labels his pawn on d6 as a problem child. If Black had kept defending with 1...Rac8, we would have seen another example of ‘restricted marching’ with 2.Rd3!. After, for instance, 2...Rfe8 3.Rc3 (White wants to force his opponent to push his c-pawn) 3...c6 4.Ne3 Rcd8 5.Rd1, Black is in big trouble. Here we see the function of the pawn on e4. Black does not manage to get rid of his weak d6 pawn with ... d6-d5.

### 2.Ne3

The white knight has done its duty now that the opponent’s pawn formation has been undermined. Now that the knight has provoked a weakening, it can target this weakness, striving for f5 via e3.

## B2) Manoeuvring against a weak pawn

Now that we have seen how we can create a weak pawn for our opponent, we need to know how we can target this new weakness. An earlier chapter – number 7 – has been devoted to weak pawns. There we paid extensive attention to the way in which a weak pawn should be besieged. The following diagram gives a schematic picture of this course of events.



White's first task is to take firm control of the square in front of the weak pawn. Then he can put pressure on the weakness in the enemy camp with his major pieces. In practice the defender will experience various problems. His pieces will have trouble protecting the weakness adequately, due to lack of space. A second problem may be that he ends up in an unpleasant pin, as in the above diagram. Here, White wins a pawn with 1.c5, after which the threats of Rxb6 or cxb6 cannot be parried.

The most attractive target on a half-open file is a backward pawn. It is weak, since it cannot be protected by fellow pawns. Another characteristic of a backward pawn is that the defender also lacks control of the square in front of it. A player who has such a pawn is mostly condemned to prolonged suffering on the rack. The following game shows such a siege in practice.

□ **Keres,Paul**

■ **Stahlberg,Gideon**

Zurich ct 1953 (20)



White will conduct his operations along the f-file, and Black will conduct his along the c- and d-files. The course of the game will show that the f-file is more important than the c- and the d-files put together.

**1.h4!**

White points his arrows at the f7 pawn, which is well protected by the bishop for the moment. With the text move White puts the question to the bishop.

**1...cxd4 2.exd4 Rac8 3.Qe2 Rc7 4.Rdf1 h5**

This is a weakening pawn move – exactly what White was waiting for. Black parries the threat of 5.h5, but probably 4...Rec8 was better.

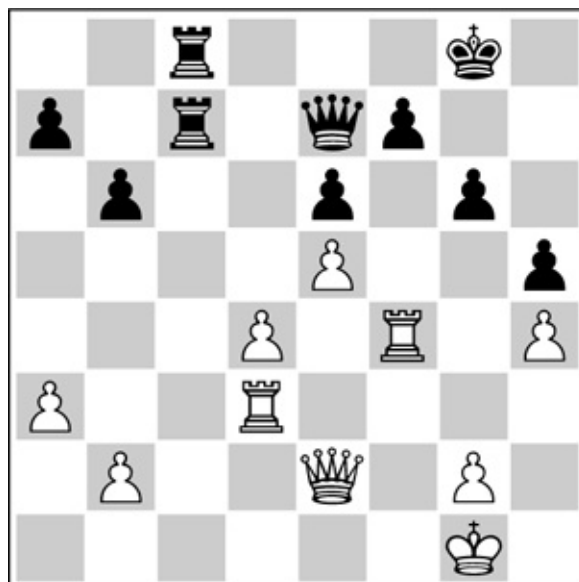
**5.R1f3 Rec8 6.Bd3**

At the right moment White exchanges the bishops, thereby robbing the pawn on f7 of an important protector.

**6...Bxd3 7.Rxd3**

Now the pawn on h5 is hanging, and Black has to allow a new weakening.

**7...g6**

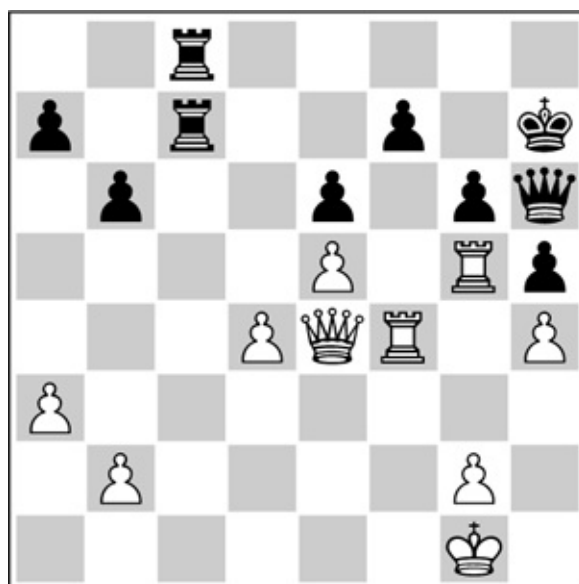


Bitter necessity. From this moment on, the pawn on f7 is a backward pawn. The f6-square is definitively in White's hands, while White can use the f-file to lay siege to the pawn.

**8.Rg3 Kh7 9.Rg5 Qf8**

The weaknesses allow White to create threats against the black king. In the meantime it has become clear that the f-file is an important weapon in White's hands, whereas the open c-file and the half-open d-file hardly offer Black anything. Also after 9...Rc1+ 10.Kh2 Qe8 11.Qf3, Black would slowly get into trouble.

**10.Qe4 Qh6**



**11.d5!**

11 ...exd5 12.Qxd5 Qf8 13.e6 Qc5+

Black takes refuge in a rook ending with a minus pawn. But Keres has little trouble to net the point.

**14.Qxc5 bxc5 15.exf7 Kg7 16.f8Q+ Rxf8 17.Rxf8 Kxf8 18.Rxg6 c4 19.Rg5 Rb7 20.Rxh5 Rxb2 21.Rc5 Rc2 22.Kh2 Ke7 23.h5c3 24.Rc6 1-0**

## 14.4 Exploiting an open file

We have reviewed different aspects of the open file. In practice, more factors can play a role.

In the first chapter we already touched on the fact that it is difficult to recognize when a certain feature is valid and when it isn't.

Studying model games and putting the problems into words can help you to get more grip on the game.

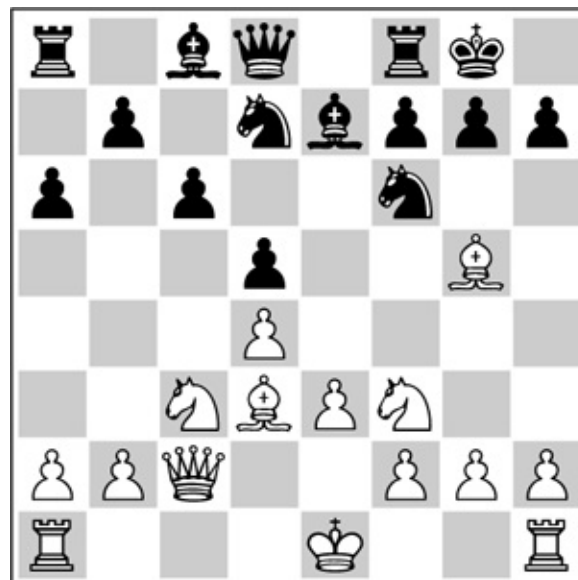
QO 12.4 (D55)

☐ Botvinnik, Mikhail

■ **Alatortsev, Vladimir**

Leningrad 1934 (1)

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 d5 3.Nf3 Be7 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 a6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Bd3 c6 9.Qc2 Nbd7**



In this position, White has several plans. Earlier in this chapter we have seen

how White can opt for a minority attack. Here, Black has lost some time by playing ...a6 as well as ...c6. For Botvinnik this is the signal for an attack!

**10.g4!**

A totally unexpected thrust on the flank.

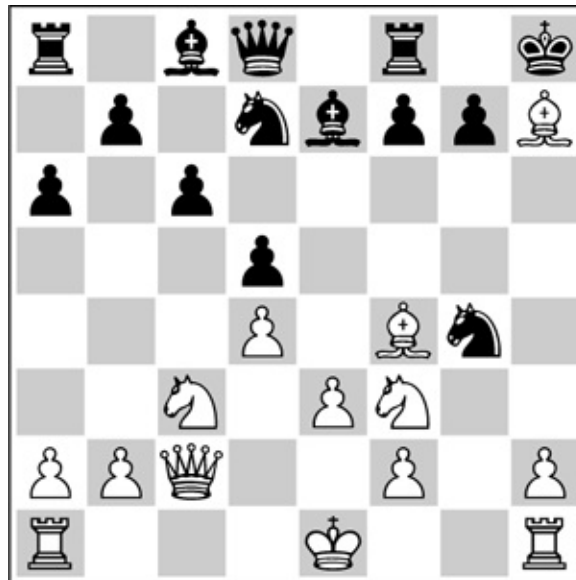
**10...Nxg4?**

Neither is 10...h6 11.Bf4 appealing for Black. The pawn move would provide the target that White needs to open a file against the black king. After 11...

Nxg4? 12.Rg1, Black is forced to weaken his king position.

10...g6 was the best choice according to Kasparov. Evidently, Alatortsev was shocked by his opponent's aggressive approach, which prevented him from keeping a cool head.

**11.Bxh7+ Kh8 12.Bf4**



**12...Ndf6**

Of course, 12...g6 was crucial, but then White lustily hammers away on the kingside: 13.Bxg6 fxg6 14.Qxg6 Ngf6 (after both 14...Ndf6 15.h3 and 14...Rxf4 15.exf4 Nf5 16.Qh5+ Nh7 17.Rg1 Nf6 18.Ne5, White wins in the attack. 18...Nxh5 19.Nf7# is an amusing line) 15.Ng5 Qe8 16.Qh6+ Kg8 17.Rg1, and the black king's position is in tatters.

**13.Bd3 Nh5**

There is nothing sensible to be suggested for Black. The g-file is open and Black is not well positioned to put up an adequate defence.

**14.h3 Ngf6 15.Be5 Ng8?!**

Perhaps 15...Nd7 could be tried, in order to force the dangerous attacking bishop on e5 to declare its intentions.

**16.0-0-0 Nh6 17.Rdg1**

White aims all his pieces at the poor black king, making use of the open g-file.  
**17...Be6 18.Qe2**



**18...Bf5?**

Black's position was already problematic, but this move hastens the end. Only with 18...Nf6 could Black have ploughed on. With 19.Rg5! White would then further increase the pressure.

**19.Bxf5 Nxf5 20.Nh4!**

**1-0**

With this blow Botvinnik finishes this smooth attacking game.

## Exercises

14.1



How does White obtain an advantage in a subtle way by harassing the black rook from the c-file?

[Solution](#)



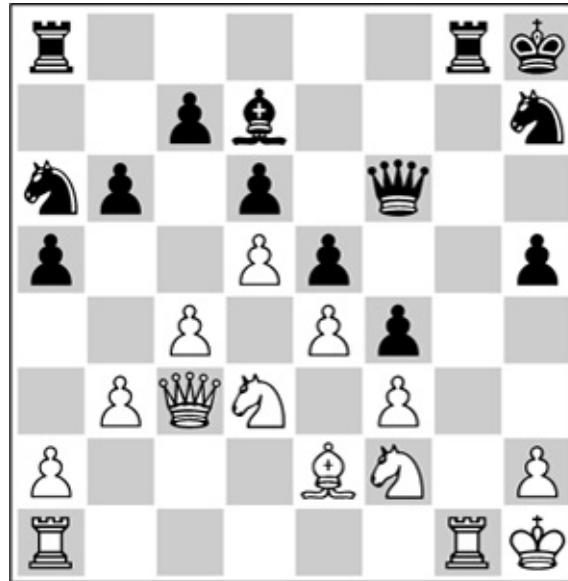
14.2



White has obtained a rather significant space advantage in the centre. Furthermore, there is a field of tension between the pawns on a4 and b5. Can you think up a plan that is in accordance with these features?

[Solution](#)

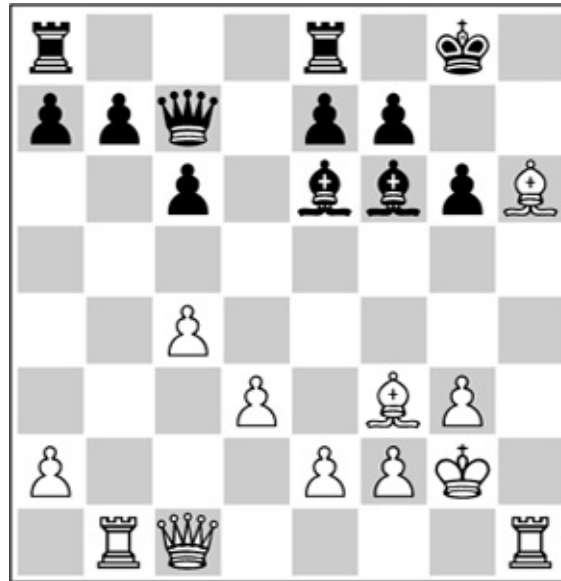
14.3



In the diagram position, the struggle for the only open file – the g-file – is crucial. Is there a way for Black to make optimal use of the g-file? Indicate the plan schematically.

[Solution](#)

14.4



In this position White has opened the h-file in order to start an attack on the black king. Which manoeuvre is his best continuation, and do you see which threats will be introduced into the position?

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 15

# The bishop pair

### 15.1 Introduction

In Chapter 12 we have taken a close look at the characteristics of a bishop. For instance, we have ascertained that the fact that it can only control squares of one colour, can be an enormous handicap in certain positions. Earlier we have shown that there are positions where the knight overpowers the bishop, due to the fact that the former can attack all the squares on the board. Although the bishop can cover long distances, in some situations it has to acknowledge the knight's superiority.

If a player possesses two bishops, the shortcoming of 'monochrome' disappears. Rather the opposite is now valid: the player who has the bishop pair often has an important advantage, since he can control all squares with his bishops. Whether the opposite side has a bishop and knight or two knights, in many cases they will be no match for the bishop pair. Therefore, Steinitz considered the possession of two bishops a mighty weapon.

In the following sections we will see how a player should put his two bishops into action, and in which types of position the bishop pair can be used optimally. Obviously, the characteristics of one bishop also hold for two bishops.

### 15.2 The bishop pair in the middle-game

If there is one piece that can suffer hindrance from its own pawns, it is the bishop. Of course, other pieces are generally also hindered by pawns that are in the way, but the queen, the rook and, especially, the knight are a little more agile than the bishop.

If its own pawns are fixed, the bishop's activity is hampered in an unpleasant way. We shall see that the player who has the bishop pair must strive for open positions. Pawns that are in the way must be pushed forward (even if this means sacrificing them) in order to enable the bishop to do its job on an open diagonal. From Chapter 12, where the subject of diagonals was discussed, we know that the bishop is better placed at some distance from the actual battlefield. There it will be less vulnerable, while it is still supporting the attack.

In short:

- 1) A bishop works well in a position with open diagonals;
- 2) A bishop works excellently from a distance.

Now it is time to look at the types of position in which the two bishops can best exert their combined influence. We will look at the role of the bishop pair in different types of positions.

There are pretty examples in chess literature where the bishop pair unleashes its devastating power on the enemy position. One of the most beautiful examples from chess history cannot be left out here:

□ **Byrne,Robert**

■ **Fischer,Robert**

New York ch-USA 1963 (3)

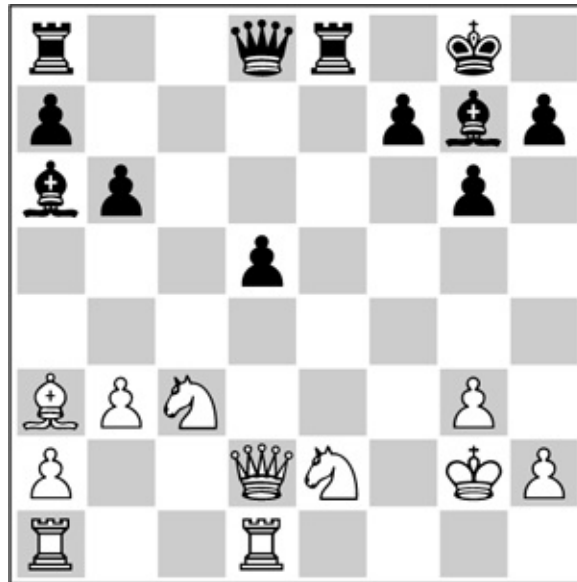


In this position Black came up with a fantastic combination.

**1...Nxf2! 2.Kxf2 Ng4+ 3.Kg1 Nxe3 4.Qd2 Nxe2!**

A surprise. Of course, the white player had looked at the knight sacrifice on f2, but he had exclusively reckoned with 4...Nxd1 5.Rxd1, when he correctly assessed White's position as better. However, Fischer has a different objective. With his last move he has conquered the bishop pair, which will be strong in this open position. Furthermore, he has eliminated White's most important defender. Now Byrne's king position is severely weakened, and Black's light-squared bishop reveals itself as a superman.

**5.Kxg2**



### 5...d4!

Bishops need open diagonals! Therefore Black does not care about one pawn more or less. The light squares especially play a crucial role, which is why Black rids himself of this pawn.

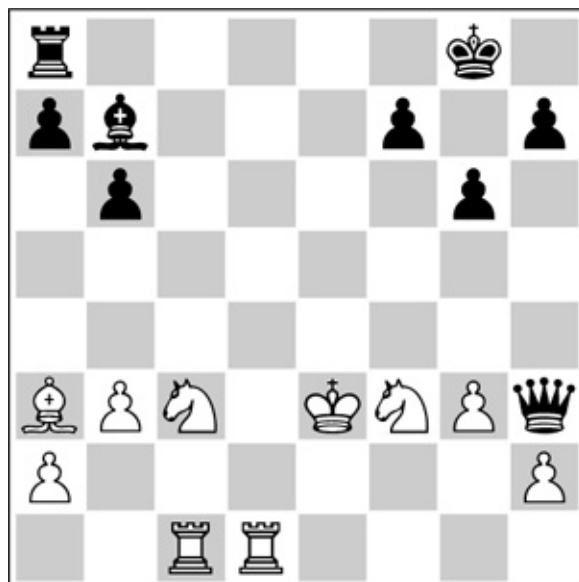
### 6.Nxd4

White must capture, since otherwise one of his knights will be hanging.

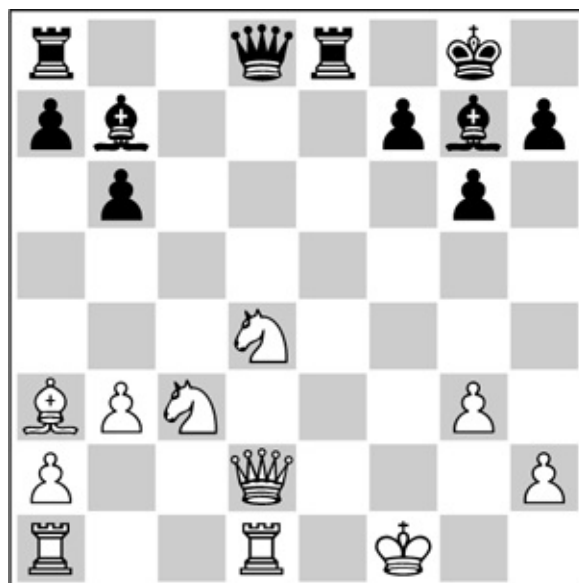
### 6...Bb7+7.Kf1

A) After 7.Kg1 Bxd4+ 8.Qxd4 Re1+! 9.Kf2 Qxd4+ 10.Rxd4 Rxa1, Black has gained an exchange. Fischer takes his analysis a little further after 11.Rd7; he enjoys showing how Black secures the spoils. There are several good moves here, but the following is by far the strongest: 11...Rc8! 12.Rxb7 Rxc3 13.Rb8+Kg7 14.Bb2 Rxa2;

B) 7.Kf2 Qd7! (with this quiet move Black lends decisive power to his attack. Analogously to the game continuation, Black invades with his queen via the light squares) 8.Rac1 (there is no good move left. 8.Nf3 does not help in the least either after 8...Qxd2+ 9.Nxd2 Bxc3 10.Rac1 Bd4+ 11.Kf1, and now Fritz 11 gives the elegant 11...Bc8!, and Black wins. Now, 12.Kg2 fails to 12...Re2+ 13.Kf3 Rf2+ 14.Ke4 Bg7, and the bishops reign supreme) 8...Qh3 9.Nf3 Bh6! (it is nice to see the dark-squared bishop put its oar in from this square) 10.Qd3 Be3+ 11.Qxe3 Rxe3 12.Kxe3.



Materially speaking White appears to be OK, but after 12...Re8+ 13.Kf2 Qf5!, White can put the pieces back in the box.

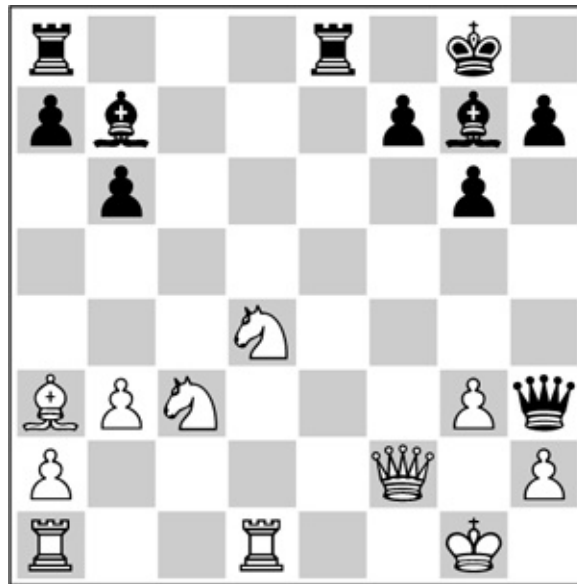


At this point something remarkable happened. Two grandmasters who were commenting on the games before an audience, thought that White had warded off the attack and that Black now had to resign. A little later they heard that one more move had been played and that the game had indeed been resigned – not by Black, but by White! The board boy was sent back to the playing hall twice, because no-one believed him.

**7...Qd7!!**

A wonderful final move, which ends all resistance. Byrne correctly calculated that he was lost after 8.Ndb5 Qh3+ 9.Kg1 Bh6, and his position collapses.

There is another, more important point in the position after 8.Qf2 Qh3+ 9.Kg1.



Analysis diagram

Now Black plays the magnificent 9...Re1+!! and gains the point in an illustrative way after 10.Rxe1 Bxd4. This was the variation Fischer had been hoping for.

In the following fragment, the bishop pair is put into action in another way.

□ **Rauzer,Vsevolod**

■ **Riumin,Nikolay**

Leningrad 1936 (7)





In this almost symmetrical position, White is better, since he has chances against the enemy king. His knights are well positioned, and it is time for the bishops to have their say.

**1.Nf5!**

Much better than 1.Nxe6, which is met by 1...fxe6!, with which Black keeps all the important squares in the centre under control. With the text move White also conquers the bishop pair. Now the question arises which bishop Black should give up.

**1...Bxf5?!**

An interesting moment. Black does not make the correct decision. After a rook move, for example 1...Rd7, White can take the bishop pair in two ways. Let's have a look:

A) With 2.Nxe6 he saddles Black up with a doubled pawn, which, however, controls some crucial squares in the centre. This does not bring White any profit;

B) After 2.Nxe7+ Rxe7, Black has got rid of his bad bishop, but White is slightly better here.

**2.exf5!**

Of course, White takes with the pawn, extending the diagonal of his light-squared bishop and making e4 the key square in his strategy.

**2...h6 3.Ne4 Nxe4 4.Bxe4 Bf6 5.Be3**



### **5...Ne7?!**

This move is too passive and gives White free rein. Black should have tried the more active 5...Na5, even though White would then win a pawn after 6.Bxc5!? Qxc5 7.b4 Qc7 8.Rxa5 (not 8.bxa5 Ra6!) 8...Rc8. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops gives Black chances to escape by the skin of his teeth.

### **6.b4!**

Now that the bishops are beautifully positioned in the centre, White first directs his attention to the queenside. With this move he increases the range of action of his other bishop.

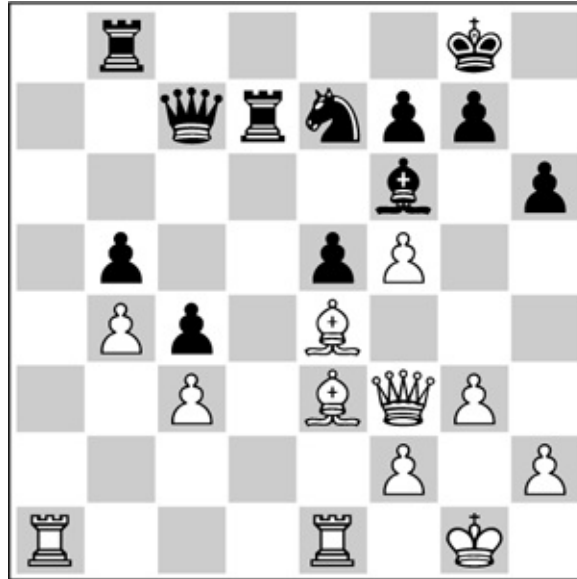
### **6...c4?!**

The alternative 6...cxb4 7.cxb4 Qc4 should have been preferred.

### **7.g3**

White prepares h2-h4. It is time to open a second front for the attack. Premature would have been 7.g4, since after 7...Nc8 8.Qg3, Black would achieve a blockade on the dark squares with 8...Qd8.

### **7...Rd7**



### 8.Ra7

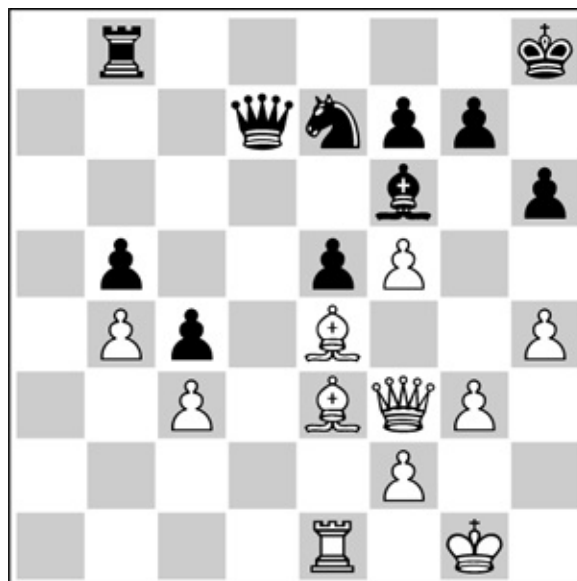
A dubious decision at first sight. As a rule, the side that has more space should keep as many pieces on the board as possible. However, Rauzer has correctly understood that the black rook is an important defender of the king's position, and therefore he trades it off.

### 8...Qd8 9.Rxd7 Qxd7 10.h4

10.Ra1 also deserved attention.

### 10...Kh8?

A weak move, which renders the black position untenable in one blow. The only move seems to be 10...Rd8, but then White has a strong option in the manoeuvre Re1-a1-a7. Now events will develop even more quickly.



### **11.g4! Ng8**

In his calculations, Black had missed that here 11...Bxh4? is out of the question. After 12.Qh3! White can make clever use of the pin: 12...Bf6 13.g5, and Black loses a piece.

### **12.g5 Be7 13.Rd1 Qc7**

Hastening the end, although also after 13...Qc8 14.Qh5 there was not much hope for Black.

### **14.f6! Bxf6**

This amounts to capitulation, but 14...gxf6 would fail to 15.Qf5, with inevitable mate. There followed:

**15.gxf6 Nxf6 16.Bc2 Rd8 17.Bxh6 Rxd1+ 18.Bxd1 e4 19.Bf4 Qd8 20.Qe2 1-0**

## **15.3. The bishop pair in the endgame**

In the endgame, other rules apply than in the middlegame. This also goes for the use of the bishop pair.

In the previous examples, we have seen how the bishops were deployed for an attack on the enemy king. In the endgame we will have to look for another way to play. Before we occupy ourselves with a few concrete examples, we will first go through things in a systematic way. For the sake of convenience, we will consider endgames where one side has the bishop pair, and the other side a bishop and a knight.

### **The side with the bishop pair has the advantage if:**

#### **1) there are pawns on two wings;**

This is favourable since a bishop can more easily cover a greater distance.

#### **2) the position has an open character;**

More so than knights, bishops are hindered by pawns in the centre. In an open position they are not hampered.

#### **3) all the rooks have been exchanged;**

If the rooks are exchanged, the bishops will be able to penetrate deeply into the enemy position.

#### **4) he can liquidate to a favourable ending.**

The side with the two bishops can mostly determine to which favourable endgame he liquidates. There are three important types of endgame:

4a) a bishop versus knight endgame; This can be a good choice if the pawns are fixed on a colour that favours the side with the bishop

4b) a pawn endgame;

4c) an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops. In the latter case it will be important that the king has squares at its disposal via which it can enter the

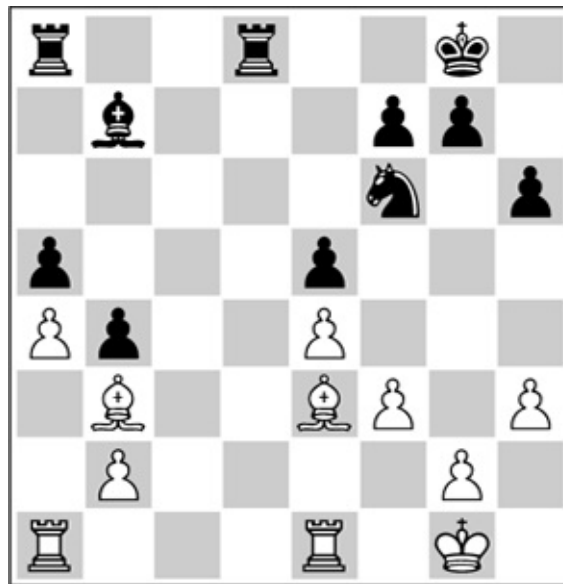
enemy position.

It would take us too far to show examples of all these types of liquidation, but the study of the following examples will make clear that the various liquidations continuously play an important role. Here are two characteristic, masterfully played endgames:

□ **Capablanca, José**

■ **Vidmar, Milan**

New York 1927 (12)



In this endgame, White has several important advantages:

- He has the bishop pair in an open position. Even though the pawns on e4 and e5 are fixed, it is clear that his bishops control beautiful diagonals.
- The black pawns on the queenside have been fixed on an unfavourable colour for Black. True, they are not on the colour of his light-squared bishop and therefore the latter cannot be called ‘bad’, but he will have trouble protecting his weaknesses on a5 and b4 later in the game as the bishop cannot perform this task.
- The black knight hardly has a future. Only if Black could manage to get the gallant steed to d4, he would not be so bad off. However, the knight would have a long way to go, and the road is practically impassable.

From the above we can conclude that White’s plan will consist of using his dark-squared bishop in particular, by aiming at the pawns on the queenside.

**1.Red1**

First White must dispute the open d-file. After immediately 1.Bb6, Black would obtain counterplay with 1...Rd3. Besides this, as we have seen, White will want to trade off all the rooks in the future.

### 1...Bc6

It is not easy for Black to think up a sensible plan. However, he probably worsens his position with this move. Perhaps 1...Kf8 was slightly more logical.

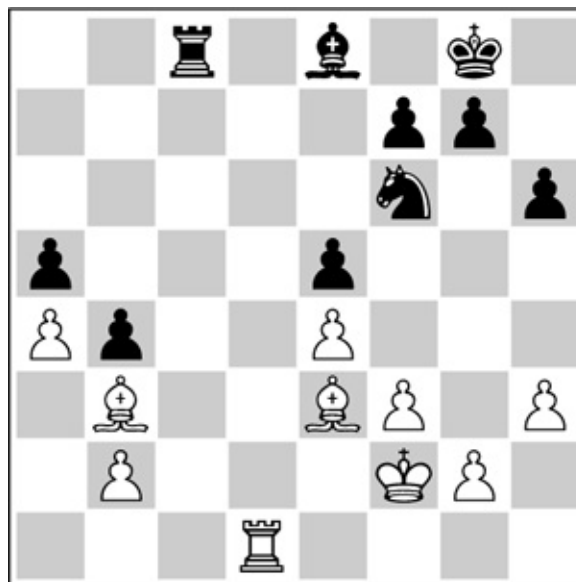
### 2.Rac1 Be8 3.Kf2

White takes his time. First he brings his king to the centre, which Black cannot imitate in these circumstances.

### 3...Rxd1

The rook exchange favours White, as we know, but the call for counterplay is so strong that Black decides to go for this disadvantageous swap.

### 4.Rxd1 Rc8



### 5.g4!

An interesting moment. It looks as if White can now collect material with 5.Bb6, but then he would run up against the unpleasant retort 5...Nd7 6.Bxa5 Nc5!.

Instead, Capablanca concludes that Black is completely passive at this point, and that only his knight prevents his immediate downfall. If the knight has to move, Rd5 will be immediately decisive – hence the text move. The intention is to gain space on the kingside and chase the knight away.

Incidentally, 5.Rd6 was another promising option, although Black could in that case fight back with 5...Bd7, intending to exchange the light-squared bishop at the right moment with ...Be6!.

### 5...Bd7

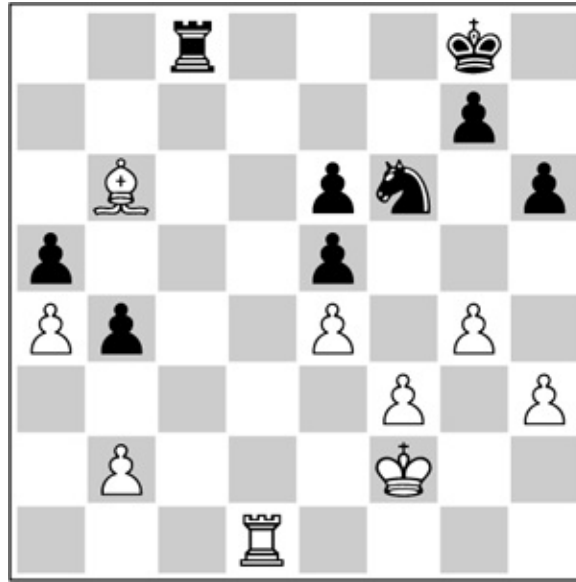
Black cannot just sit and wait aimlessly, but now he must allow the other threat

to be executed.

**6.Bb6 Be6 7.Bxe6 fxe6**

At the cost of new weaknesses, Vidmar has got rid of the white bishop pair. Now White liquidates to an ending where his bishop will beat the knight.

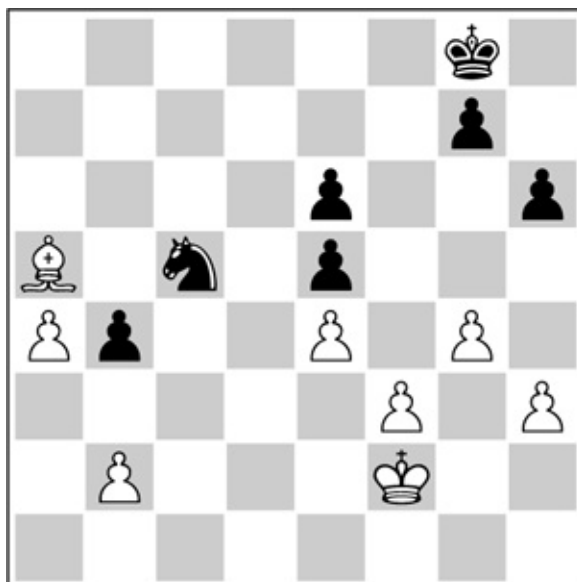
Incidentally, the intermediate check 7...Rc2+ wouldn't have made any difference, since after 8.Ke3 fxe6 9.Rd2, White wins as well.



**8.Rd8+!**

This is one of those moments where White must convert the advantage he has obtained with his bishop pair into another advantage. He exchanges the rooks, so as not to allow Black any counterplay, and attacks Black's unattended pawns on the queenside with his bishop.

**8...Rxd8 9.Bxd8 Nd7 10.Bxa5 Nc5**



**11.b3!**

How many players wouldn't have failed at the very last minute here?  
 Capablanca spots in time that he should not play 11.Bxb4? in view of 11...  
 Nd3+. After this last accurate move, the game is over.

**11...Nxb3 12.Bxb4 Nd4 13.a5**

**1-0**

Black is helpless against the strong a-pawn.

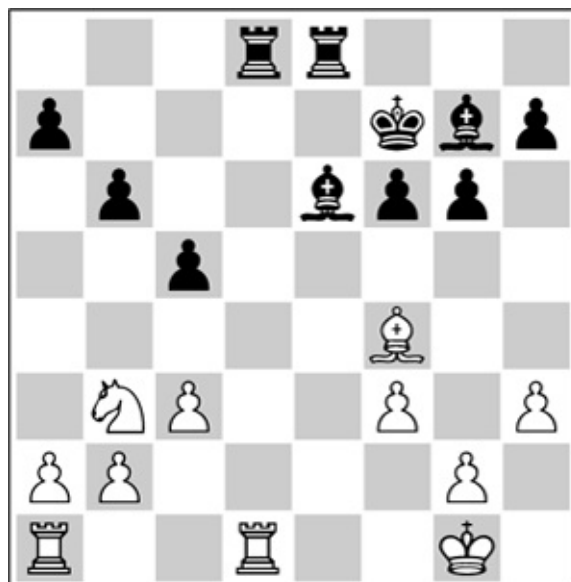
From Steinitz, on whose ideas this book is based to a large extent, I have also found a fragment in which he converts the advantage of the bishop pair to a win in exemplary fashion.

□ **Englisch, Berthold**

■ **Steinitz, Wilhelm**

London 1883





Studying this position, we see the following:

- Black has the bishop pair, of which especially his light-squared bishop is strong;
- There are pawns on both wings, which is to the advantage of the side with the two bishops. Moreover, there are no fixed pawns;
- The white knight is badly positioned.

These factors mean that Black is clearly better, if not winning here. His plan consists of the following stages:

**Stage I:** By putting his pawns on dark squares, he restricts the mobility of the white bishop, which was reasonably active until now. This has already taken place on the queenside (pawns on a7, b6 and c5), and on the kingside Black will strive for a set-up with pawns on h6, g5 and f4.

**Stage II:** At a convenient moment Black will exchange a rook – preferably two.

**Stage III:** By means of an action on the queenside with ...a7-a5-a4 he threatens to attack the white pawn formation – especially the strong point c3. White will then be forced to play Nb3-cl, followed by a2-a3, creating even more weaknesses on the light squares.

**Stage IV:** Black can then dominate the knight with ...Be6-c4 and (after a double rook exchange) prepare a possible king march to the queenside. He also has the breaking possibility of ...b6-b5-b4, with which he can extend the diagonals for his bishops.

On the basis of the above it is not so hard to find Black's next move.

**1...g5!2.Rxd8**

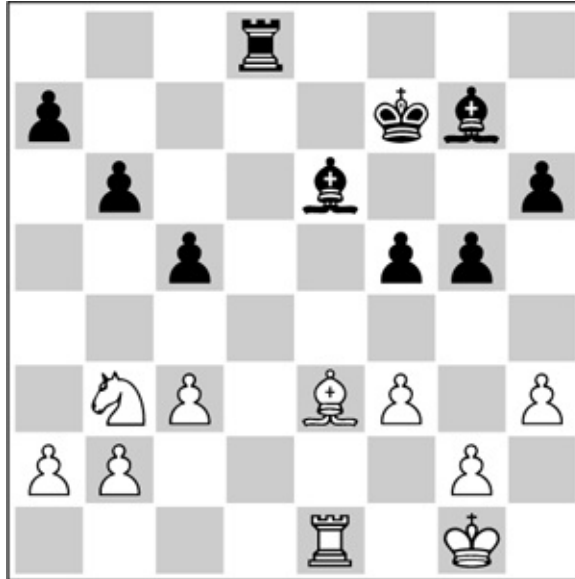
This plays into Black's hands, but the immediate 2.Be3 was obviously

impossible.

**2...Rxd8 3.Be3h6!**

Black prepares to march with his f-pawn, to increase his space advantage.

**4.Re1 f5**



**5.f4?**

An understandable mistake: White does not want to allow ...f5-f4, but the cure is worse than the disease. Now that he has given up the square e4 (a light square!), this will cause big problems for him later on.

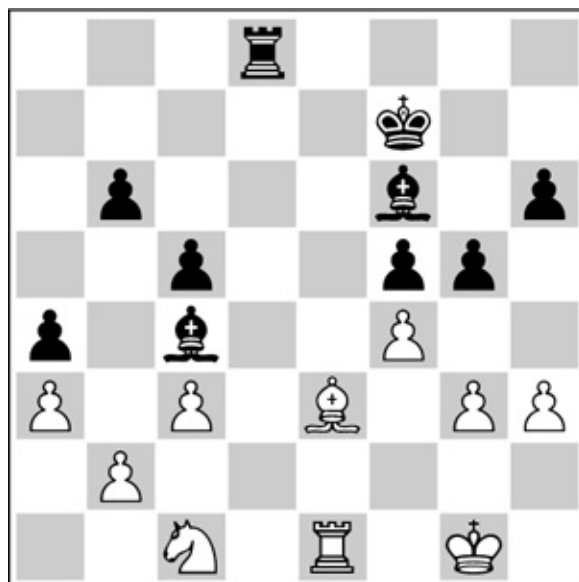
**5...Bf6 6.g3 a5!**

Here is the thematic march.

**7.Nc1 a4 8.a3**

The light squares are getting to be more and more important for Black.

**8...Bc4**

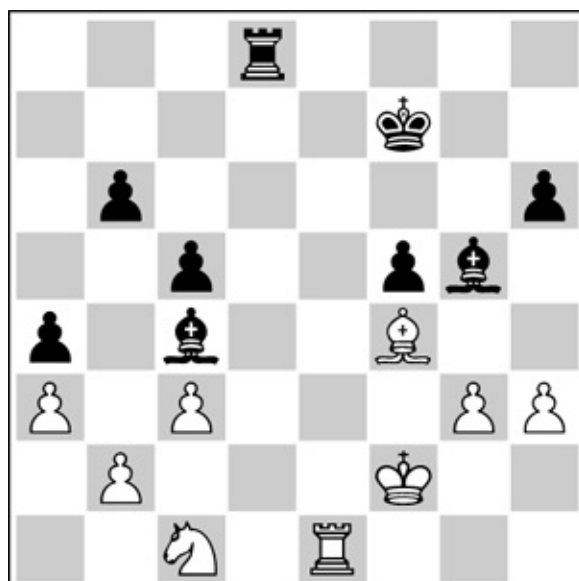


### 9.Kf2

So far the winning process has followed the above-mentioned scheme. For the time being, Black is not able to force a rook exchange, and he should now have continued with the logical 9...Rd5!. Then he could have followed up with a march of the b-pawn, which, after ...b6-b5-b4, would lead to a 'corrosion' of the white pawn formation. This in turn would lead to a passed a-pawn, which would then have to force the decision.

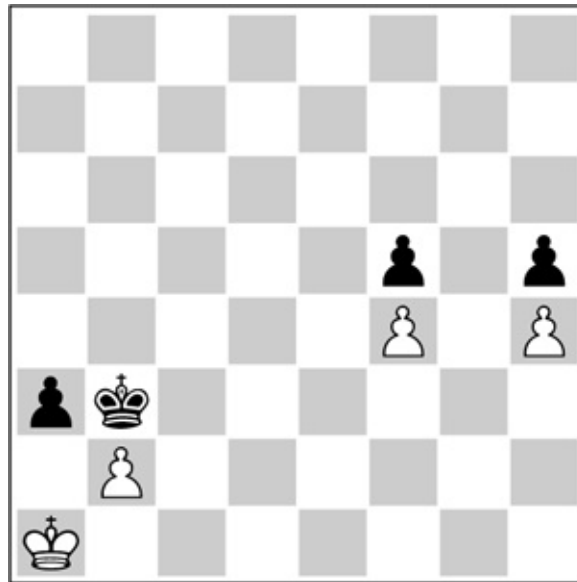
Steinitz has his own solution to the problem of this position, and decides to give up his bishop pair in order to conquer the invasion square d2 for his rook. In modern practice, a grandmaster would doubtlessly have opted for the other solution, mentioned above.

### 9...gxf4?!10.Bxf4 Bg5



### 11.Bxg5

The alternative 11.Ke3 is refuted by 11...Re8+ 12.Kf2 Bxf4 (in case of 12...Rxe1 13.Kxe1 Bxf4 14.gxf4, the ending that arises after 14...Ke6 15.Ne2 Bxe2 16.Kxe2 Kd5 17.Kd3 b5 18.h4 h5 19.Ke3 Kc4 20.Kd2 Kb3 21.Kc1 b4 22.axb4 cxb4 23.cxb4 Kxb4 24.Kb1 (not 24.Kc2 on account of 24...Kc4 25.Kd2 Kd4 and Black wins) 24...Kb3 25.Ka1 a3



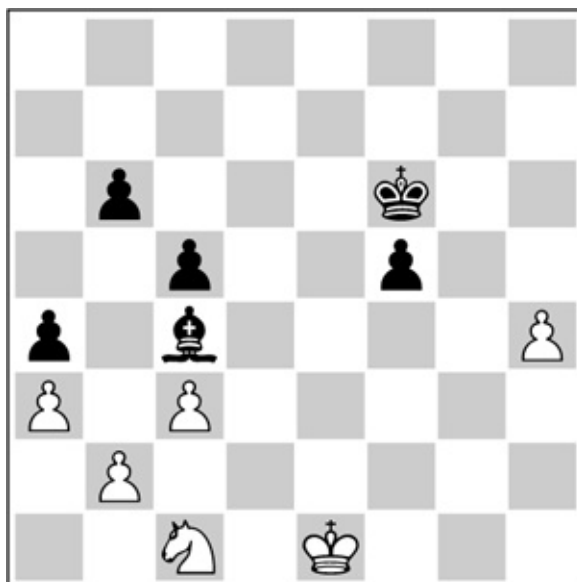
Analysis diagram

is a draw in view of White's amazing reply 26.Kb1!!, and the best that Black can do is give stalemate) 13.gxf4 Rd8! 14.Ke3 Kg6, and Black slowly but surely makes progress.

### 11...h4 12.Ke3 Kf6 13.h4

White creates an Outside passed pawn', which would be to his favour in a pawn ending in particular. However, it will not do him any good, since he will not be able to save the game due to several other circumstances.

### 13...gxh4 14.gxh4 Re8+ 15.Kf2 Rxe1 16.Kxe1



### 16...Ke5!

Quite paradoxically, the black king moves through the centre, apparently not paying attention to the outside passed pawn.

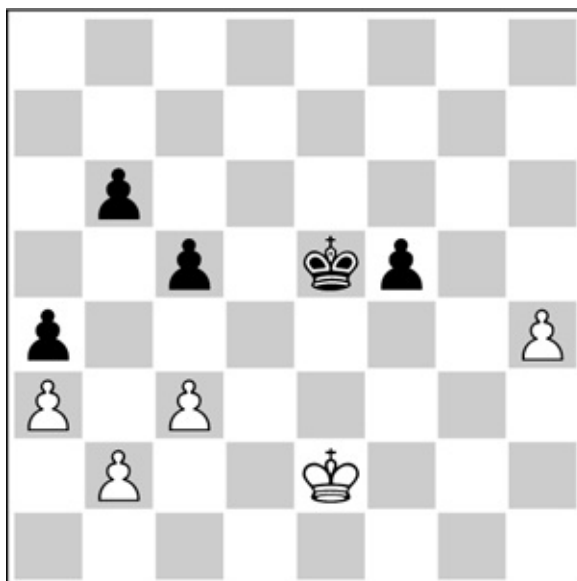
### 17.Ne2

Finally the pathetic knight tries to join the game. But the fun is short-lived.

### 17...Bxe2!

No dogmas for Steinitz! Black has excellently calculated that he will win the pawn ending. This is slightly surprising, since White has the outside passed pawn. But the fact that the white king is too far from the centre brings Black the win.

### 18.Kxe2



**18...Kf4!**

The only route is along the front of the pawn.

**19.c4 Kg4 20.Ke3f4+**

Black cannot overindulge in the white h-pawn, as in that case he would be counted out with 21.Kf4!.

**21.Ke4f3 22.Ke3 Kg3**

White resigned.

In this last example, we saw that the bishop pair can also operate well in a fairly closed position. Playing over the following game, we will encounter all the specific factors that play a role in such cases.

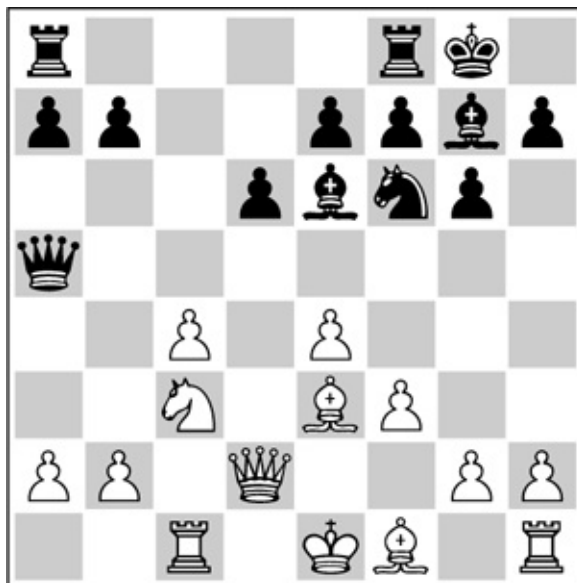
SI 33.5 (B36)

□ **Polugaevsky, Lev**

■ **Ivkov, Borislav**

Belgrade 1969 (1)

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4 Nxd4 6.Qxd4 g6 7.e4 Bg7 8.Be3 d6 9.f3 0-0 10.Qd2 Be6 11.Rc1 Qa5**



**12.Nd5**

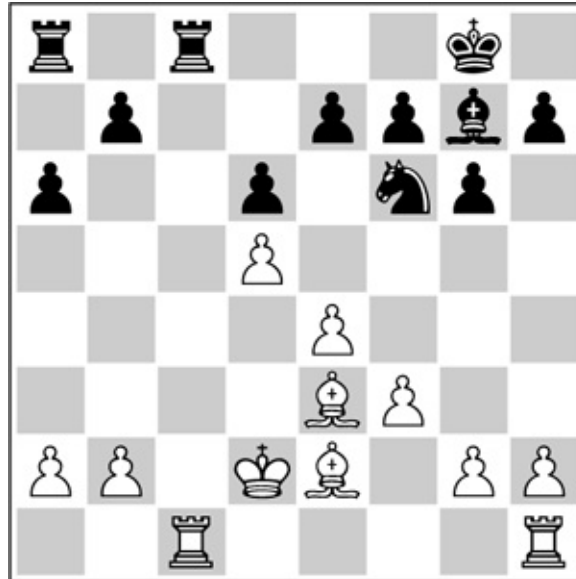
White liquidates to a queenless middle-game, which will soon result in an ending.

**12...Qxd2+ 13.Kxd2 Bxd5**

Black must part with the bishop pair, since 13...Nxd5 14.cxd5 Bd7 15.Rc7

would cost a pawn.

**14.cxd5 Rfc8 15.Be2 a6**



**16.b4!**

White has several advantages here:

- He possesses the bishop pair.
- He has an advantage in space.
- Black has no counterplay.

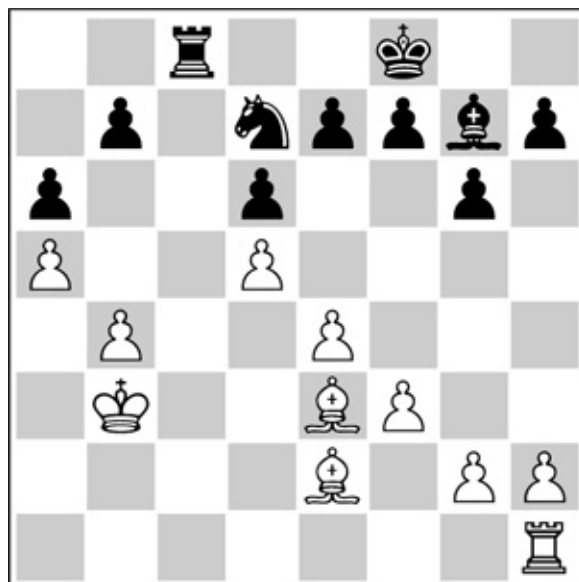
**16...Kf8**

The black player tries to stay on his feet without allowing any weaknesses. Judging by the further course of the game, 16...e6 would have been a better option. After 17.dxe6 fxe6, White has the added advantage of having fewer pawn islands, but it must be admitted that Black has counterplay.

**17.a4**

In other fragments we have seen that the side with the bishop pair should make optimum use of it. White pushes his a-pawn in order to fix the pawn structure. In the distant future, a passed white rook pawn will be a potential danger for the side with the knight.

**17...Nd7 18.a5 Bb2 19.Rc2 Rxc2+ 20.Kxc2 Bg7 21.Kb3 Rc8**



With a trick Black has conquered the only open file, because White is not – yet – prepared to exchange the second pair of rooks. However, the black player will not derive much fun from his open file, as White will not let him enter anywhere.

## 22.Bd2

Since in other examples we have seen that exchanging all the rooks mostly favours the side with the bishop pair, we might ask why White does not want to swap the remaining pair of rooks here. In this case the position has a closed character due to the fact that both players still have seven pawns each left. Although his position is cramped, Black has no real weaknesses. With the rooks still on the board, White can try to open a second file, and thereby create a target.

## 22...Bd4 23.g4 Kg7 24.g5!

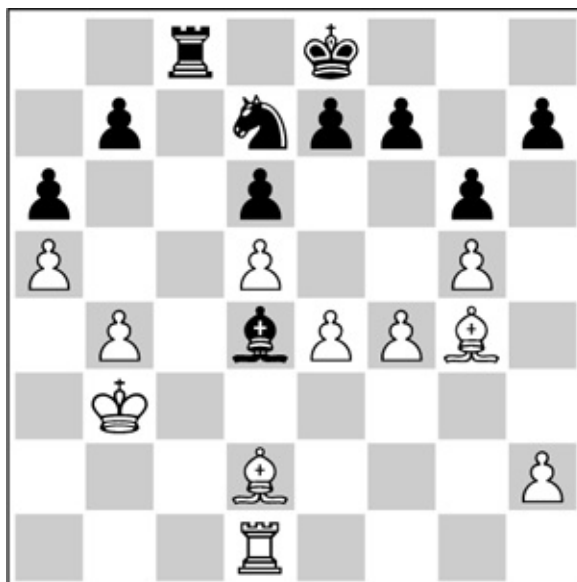
Black is being tied up further and further.

## 24...Rc7

At this point, 24...e6 25.dxe6 fxe6 26.f4 would have been no picnic either for Black.

## 25.Rd1 Kf8 26.f4 Rc8 27.Bg4 Ke8





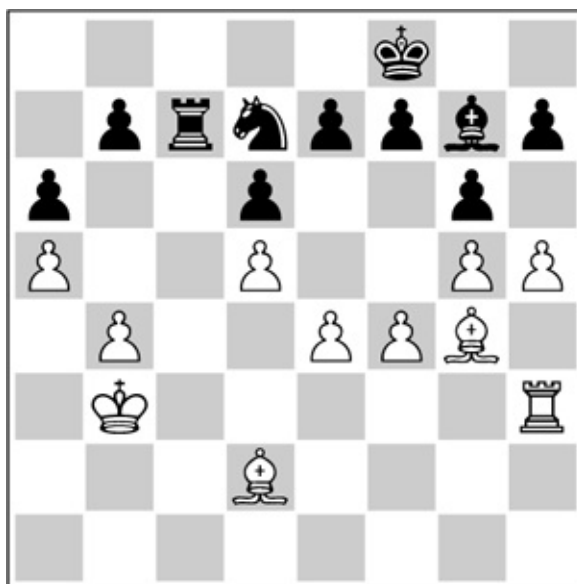
### 28.Rf1

The white plan is starting to take shape. Please note that thanks to his space advantage, the white rook has much more to say than the black one, even though the latter is standing on the only open file.

### 28...Rc7 29.h4

The 'strangling process' continues.

### 29...Bg7 30.h5 Bd4 31.Rh1 Bg7 32.Rh3 Kf8



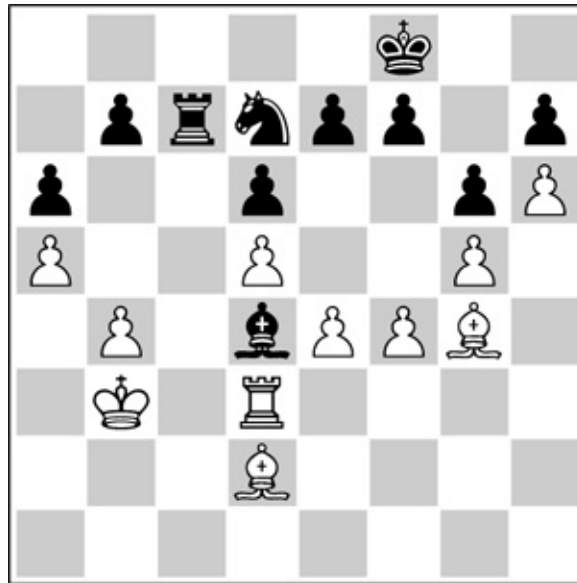
An interesting moment. How should White make progress? Of course he can open the h-file at any moment with hxg6. But the question is: what good will it bring him? Polugaevsky has a flash of genius.

### 33.h6!

Oddly enough, White closes the h-file and in doing so, maintains the closed character of the position. However, Polugaevsky is planning to open another file later, and then he wants to make use of the far advanced pawn on h6. This pawn can be of great importance if White manages to attack the pawn on h7.

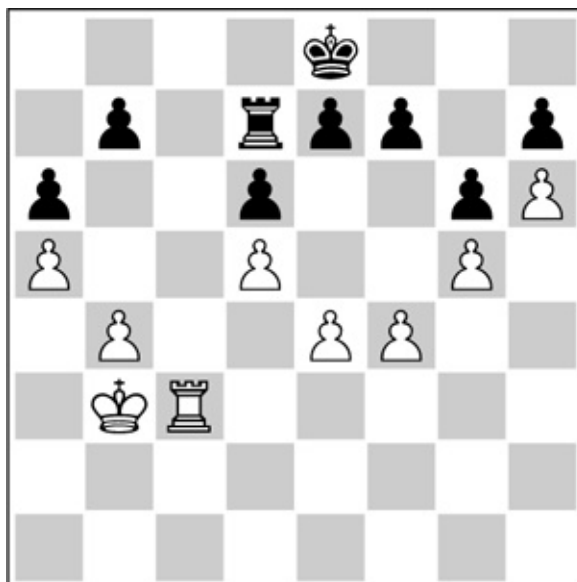
**33...Bd4 34.Rd3!**

A vital link in the winning plan. The black bishop is ideally placed on d4, but now it is forced to declare its intentions.



**34...Ba7**

Shouldn't the bishop stay on the a1-h8 diagonal on principle? In order to arm himself against White's idea of opening the e-file and then attacking the h7 pawn, the bishop should indeed have been kept on the long diagonal. But then White has another instructive idea to make progress. After, for instance, 34... Bh8, he would suddenly liquidate to a rook ending with 35.Bxd7 Rxd7 36.Bc3 Bxc3 (36. ... f6 is probably not the solution either) 37.Rxc3 Ke8, and Black must wait in complete passivity for White to convert his advantage to a win.



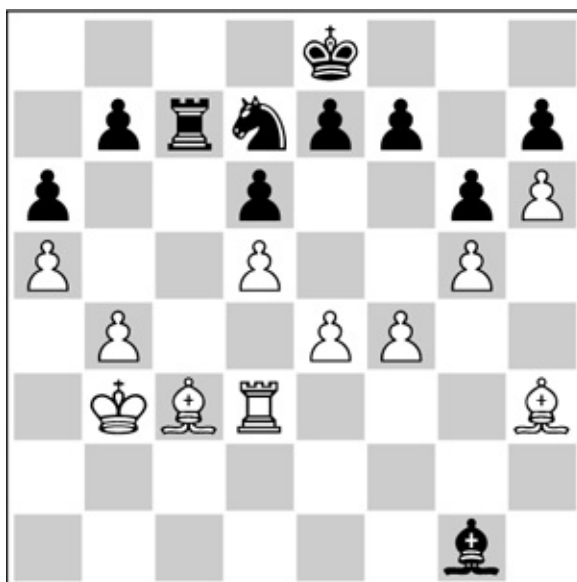
Analysis diagram

For example: 38.b5! Kd8 (after 38...axb5 39.Rc8+ Rd8 40.Rxd8+ Kxd8 41.Kb4 Kd7 42.Kxb5 Kc7 43.e5, White wins the pawn ending) 39.b6 Ke8 (or 39...e6 40.dxe6 fxe6 41.f5, and because White can work with Rc7, he will win the ensuing pawn ending by means of a breakthrough) 40.f5, and White wins.

**35.Bh3 Bg1 36.Bc3!**

Everything according to plan. The bishop takes possession of the long diagonal, closes the c-file and supports the long-prepared action e4-e5. Later the bishop will play an important role from this square, since via the f6-square it can lend the white rook a helping hand to enter the black position.

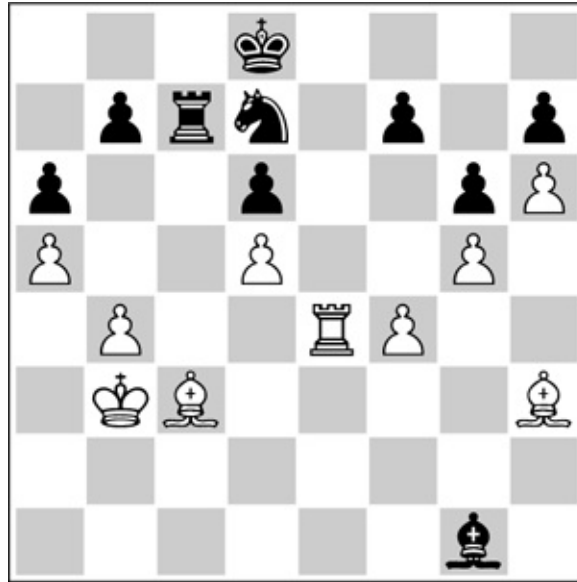
**36...Ke8**



**37.e5**

Now White does not have to linger any longer. The second file can be opened!

**37...Bh2 38.exd6 exd6 39.Re3+ Kd8 40.Re4 Bg1**



It's impressive how the white bishops have taken control of the position.

Polugaevsky now finally decides to say goodbye to his mighty bishop pair:

**41.Bxd7!**

And Black resigned. After 41...Rxd7 42.Bf6+, he cannot prevent the white rook from entering the back rank and conquering the pawn on h7. A good technical performance by Polugaevsky.

## Exercises

15.1



The following interesting move sequence appeared on the board: **19.Qe3 f4 20.Qd3 fxe3 21.hxe3 Rfd8 22.Qe3 cxb4 23.axb4 Rxb4 24.Rxa7 Rb7 25.Ra6 Rc7 26.Bh3 e5 27.Ba3 Ne8.**

Now answer the following questions:

- Who is better in the diagram position and what is the verdict after the moves played?
- Analyse the above move sequence and indicate at which points good and/or bad moves were played.
- What is the best move for White to play (after Black's 27th move)? Give a reason for your answer.

**Solution**

15.2



White's position is superior, but he must make progress. How can he go about this?

[Solution](#)

15.3



Black has two beautiful bishops aimed at the white king position, but with his last move, **21.Be4**, White appears to have averted the main threats. Now Black played **21...Qh4**, and he was confronted with the reply **22.g3**. Thereupon he devised a brilliant combination, in which his bishop pair fulfils the starring role. Do you see with which move he should start? Work out a few important variations.

[Solution](#)

15.4



Black has chosen a sharp set-up, but with his last move **11.Nb3** White wants to either drive back or eliminate the strong black bishop. Can Black, with a swift action, make use of his beautifully placed bishops nonetheless? Think of actions along the h-file.

[Solution](#)



## Chapter 16

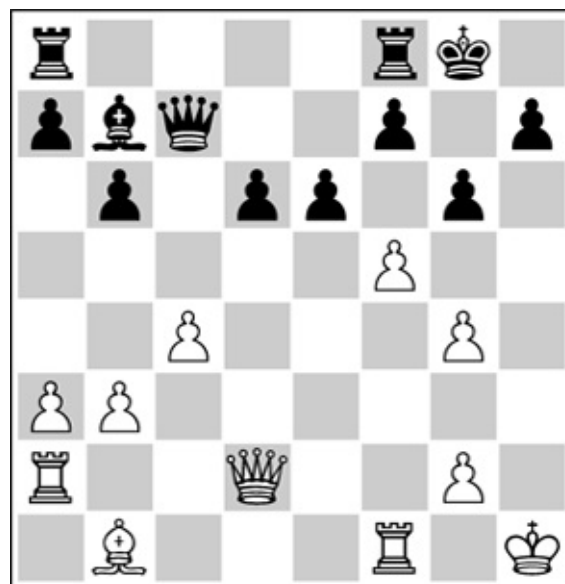
# Control of a rank

### 16.1 Introduction

A player is inclined to play ‘bottom-up’, i.e. from his own side of the board, towards his opponent. Because of this, the effect that pieces can have on a rank escapes our attention now and then. Imagine how many pieces have already been blundered by overlooking the horizontal activity of an enemy piece! See, for instance, the following opening trap: 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.c3 Nf6 4.Be2 Nxe4?? 5.Qa4+.

When analysing games with the Dutch grandmaster Karel van der Weide, it often struck me that I had trouble foreseeing ‘long’ queen moves like Qa4-g4 or Qb3-h3. For him, finding such moves was never a problem – he used to churn them out like nobody’s business.

In this chapter we look mainly at how we can involve our pieces in the game via a rank. In the following example we even see the white player using two ranks.



White has a tremendous attacking position. With his next move he creates a mate threat with 2.Qh6.

### 1.f6

Black has only one defence.

### 1...Kh8 2.Qh6 Rg8

The first threat is warded off, but now White involves his rooks in the attack.

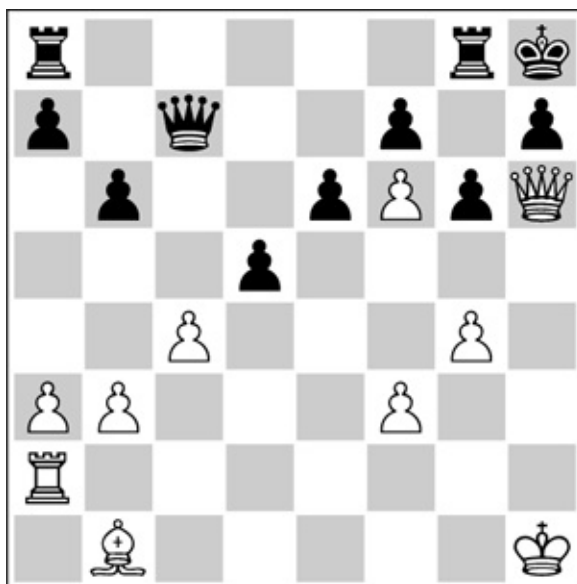
### 3.Rf3!

Now the immediate threat is 4.Qxh7+! followed by 5.Rh3#. This manoeuvre is called the 'rook lift': the rook is moved to a certain rank, on which it will join the attack.

### 3...Bxf3 4.gxf3

But now it is the other rook that gets to play the starring role on the second rank. Again White threatens the queen sacrifice.

### 4...d5



### 5.f4!

5.Rh2 would also have won, but the text move is the most accurate. White mustn't be tempted to play 5.Qxh7+?? in view of 5...Kxh7 6.Rh2+Qxh2+.

### 5...dxc4 6.Qxh7+ Kxh7 7.Rh2#

1-0

We have looked at the effect of a piece on one of our own ranks. Some of the opponent's ranks, especially the seventh or eighth ones, can be objects of interest.

From our experience we know that the invasion of the enemy camp can be a strategic goal. In chapter 14, the relation between an open file and the seventh rank was discussed. In the present chapter I want to systematize a few aspects that are connected with the invasion of the seventh (or eighth) rank. Even though in this book the emphasis lies on strategy, in this case I cannot avoid bringing several frequently seen tactical tricks into the limelight.

In most cases, a lot is going on on the seventh rank. In particular, two rooks on the seventh will often display devastating power. Nimzowitsch already pointed this out a long time ago.

**1.Rh7+Kg8 2.Rfg7+Kf8**

### 3.Rxd7 Kg8

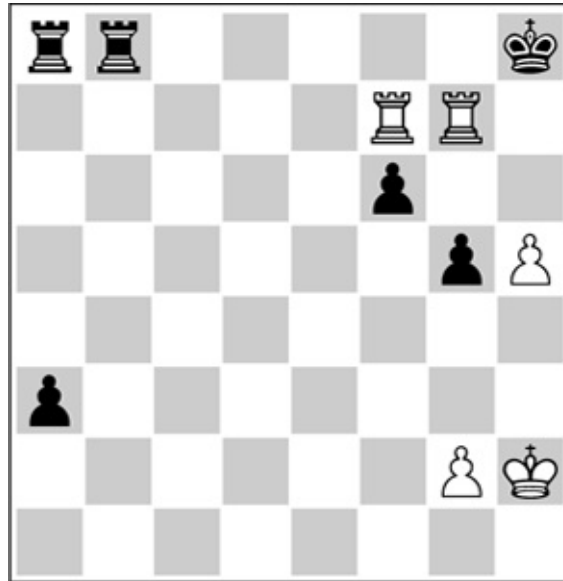
#### 4.Rdg7+

4...Kf8 5.Rxc7 Kg8 6.Rcg7+ Kf8 7.Rxb7 Kg8 8.Rbg7+ Kf8 9.Rxa7

**9...Kg8**

- **Mate patterns**

In the previous example we have seen the devastating power of two rooks on the seventh (or second) rank. But the harvest that can be gathered is not always so great. Sometimes there is nothing more to be gained than a perpetual check – unless help arrives from an unexpected quarter.



**1.Rh7+ Kg8 2.Rfg7+ Kf8**

Again the rooks have first taken up the winning starting position from the previous diagram.

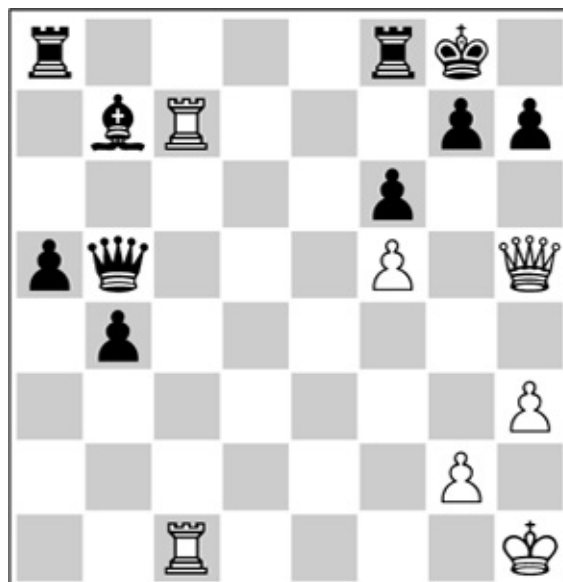
**3.h6!**

This pawn protects the Rg7, creating a mate threat that cannot be averted. It is important to have an h-pawn here, since there would be no win with a pawn on g6, as is easy to verify.

**3...a2 4.Rh8#**

**1-0**

- **Violent entry**



Now and then something has to be chopped off so as to enable the other pieces to have a field day on the seventh rank.

**1.Rxg7+!**

With this heavy sacrifice White forces a passage along the seventh rank.

**1 ...Kxg7 2.Rc7+ Kg8 3.Qxh7#**

By means of the rook sacrifice White extended the seventh rank, destroying the protective layer around the black king. Next, the second rook entered the black position, making the mate inevitable.

We can see that the 'slight' pawn weakening ...f7-f6 has made the seventh rank vulnerable. With the pawn on f7 there would be no problem for Black.

Such a swift action is characteristic for seventh-rank combinations. In almost all cases it is useful to combine your actions with a check.

In the following diagram, Black has an extremely dangerous passed pawn, so White must be quick. He needs to harass the black king with a check.



**1.Qf1+**

White must think carefully on which square he checks. f2 would be wrong, since it would leave him without a good follow-up. Now everything comes with check.

**1...Ke8 2.Qb5+ Kf8 3.Qb4+ Ke8 4.Qe7#**

**1-0**

I couldn't leave out the next example, which belongs to the classics in chess history

□ **Geller,Efim**

■ **Euwe,Max**

Zurich ct 1953 (2)



### 1...Rh8!?

Totally unexpectedly, Black takes over the initiative. By sacrificing a rook he diverts the white queen from the c2-square, so as to invade with his rook on the seventh rank. After long analyses with modern computer programs, the move turns out not to win by force objectively, but the courage needed to play such a move in a game, combined with the psychological effect of such a sacrifice, is a sign of brilliancy. We will see the consequences of the rook sacrifice in the following.

Kasparov indicates that Black was already better and that he should have confirmed his advantage with 1...Qd5. After 2.Re4 Kasparov claims that Black's best continuation is 2...Qc4?!.



## Analysis diagram

However, the newest versions of the silicon monsters make mincemeat of this: after 3.Rg4!, the white attack is very strong.

The engine suggests that the peculiar move 2...Rc6! maintains the advantage for Black. The idea is that as yet, White cannot do anything with his Re4, whereas Black can increase the pressure on the pinned piece with a possible ...Re6.

### 2.Qxh8

Of course, Geller felt compelled to accept the sacrifice.

### 2...Rc2

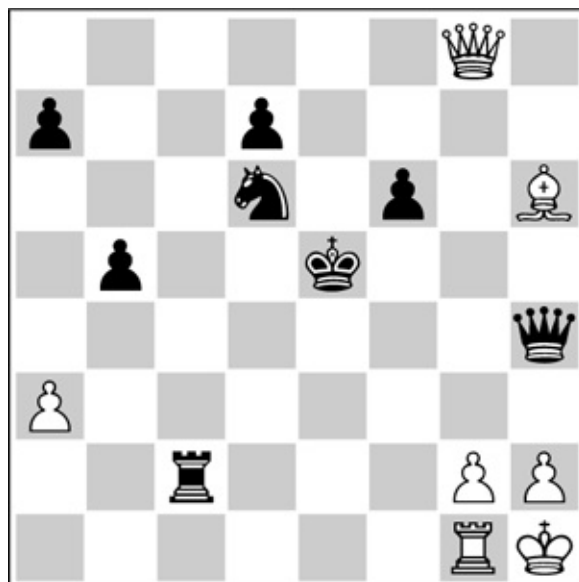


### 3.Rc1?

White is under the impression that he cannot defend against the strike on g2, so he desperately tries to arm himself against the lethal check on c4 that Black has weaved into the position. Only with the extremely hard-to-find 3.d5!! could White have disrupted the coordination between the black pieces:

A) Various sources give 3...Qb6+ here, but after 4.Kh1 Qf2 5.Rg1 Bxd5 White has the beautiful point 6.Re4!. After 6...Bxe4 7.Nxe4 Qh4, he will gain the upper hand with, for example, 8.Nd6+ (certainly not 8.Bxg7?? Qxe4 9.Qf8+ Kg6 10.Bh6 d5, and Black is clearly better) 8...Nxd6 9.Qxg7+Ke6 10.Qg8+Ke5.

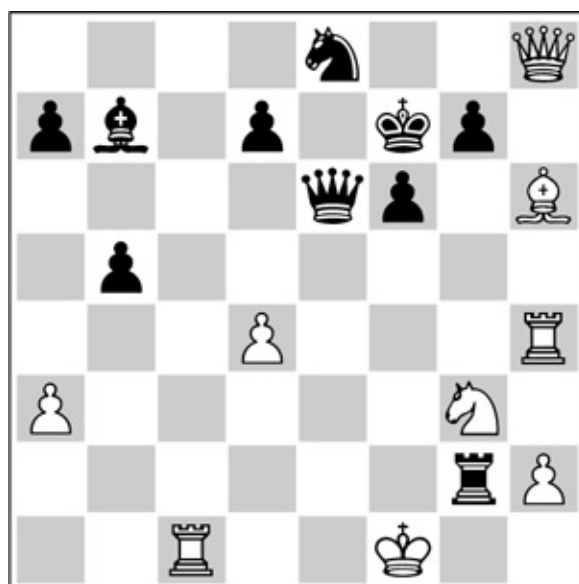




The round-up of the white king is in full swing and with the elegant quiet moves 11.Rd1! Qe4 12.Be3!!, White gets a winning initiative. Such moves can hardly be found without the modern 'silicon monsters'. Even present-day grandmasters are hardly able to see such tricks far in advance. 12...Qxe3 13.Qd5+ Kf4 14.g3+ Kg4 15.Rd4+ is the fitting conclusion to this variation.

B) 3...Bxd5 4.Rd1! (the rook is much better on this square, since it keeps a close watch on the bishop on d5) 4...Rxd1 5.Kf1 (here we see the difference with the game, where Euwe, with the bishop still on b7 and the white pawn on d4, dashes off a deadly attacking move) 5...gxh6 6.Qxh6 Bf3! 7.Rd2, and a peaceful conclusion is in the offing.

**3...Rxd1 4.Kf1**



#### 4...Qb3!

This is the original move with which Black crowns his counterattack. White does not have a defence against the invasion of the black pieces. The beautiful thing is that the black queen supports the creation of a mating net from the third rank.

#### 5.Ke1

5.Rf4 wouldn't help either after 5...Qd3+ 6.Ke1 Qd2+ 7.Kf1 Qxc1#.

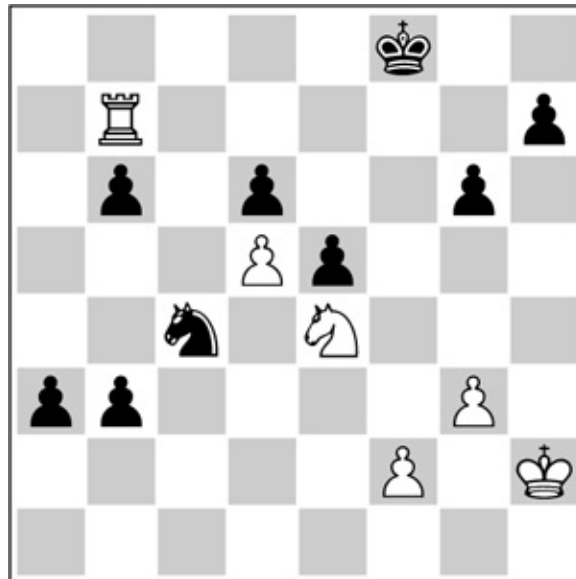
#### 5...Qf3

And White resigned. 5...Qf3 6.Rf4 Qe3+ would lead to mate.

- **Draw by perpetual check**

Not everything in the garden of chess is lovely. Sometimes you have to look for counterchances in a bad or even a losing position. In such cases, it is logical to look if we can pose a threat to the enemy king in one way or another. A rook penetrating on the seventh rank, in combination with a knight on the sixth, may work wonders.

A glance at the next diagram position teaches us that White is in great trouble.



How on earth can he stop the maverick duo on b3 and a3? As it turns out, he can only save the half-point with the following contrivance.

#### 1.Rd7!

As will soon become apparent, this is the only good square for the rook. 1.Nf6 is less accurate, as Black then plays 1...Nd2 2.Rd7 Nf3+ 3.Kg2 Ng5, when he has managed to involve his knight in the defence with tempo.

#### 1...b2 2.Nf6 b1Q 3.Nxh7+ Ke8 4.Nf6+

Besides giving checks, the knight also protects its own rook, giving the black

king no chance to escape.

**4...Kf8 5.Nh7+ Kg8 6.Nf6+**

And Black must settle for the perpetual, since after 6...Kh8 he will be mated.

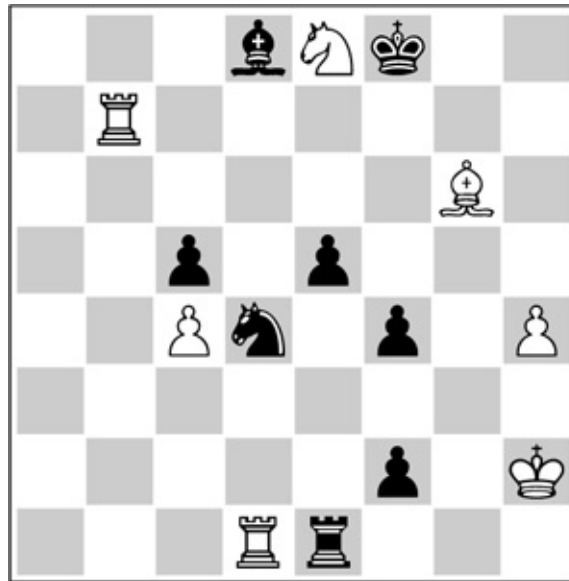
**6...Kf8**

1/2-1/2

□ **VanWely,Loek**

■ **Reinderman,Dimitri**

Dieren 1990 (2)



Forsaken by any benevolent spirits, the talented black player produced the move

**1...HQ??**

Black could have won easily with 1...Nf3+!, chasing the white king to a square where the promotion is with check: 2.Kh3 f1Q+ and it is all over.

**2.Rf7+! Kg8**

More or less forced. 2...Kxe8 might be seen as a losing attempt after 3.Rxf4+ Kd7 4.Rxf1.

**3.Rg7+ Kf8**

3...Kh8 would not have helped either. It is again perpetual check after 4.Rh7+ Kg8 5.Rg7+.

**4.Rf7+ Kg8**

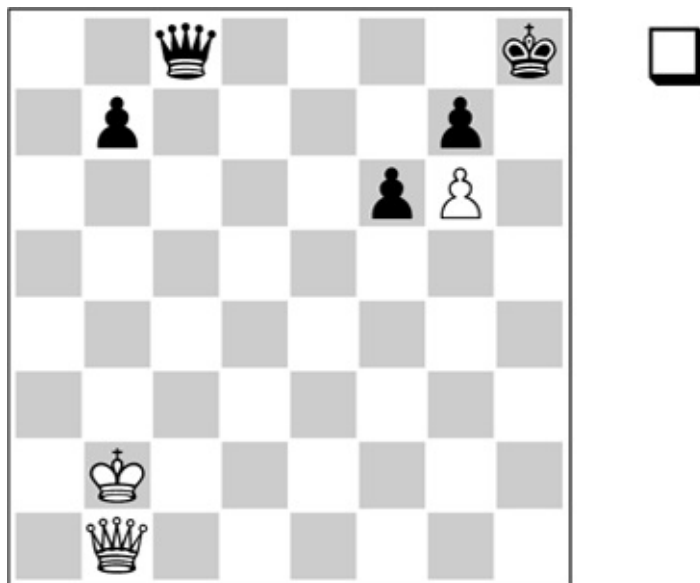
And, disappointed by the course of events, Black played on until the 64th move before finally conceding to a draw. Out of respect for what had happened, the white player refrained from claiming the half-point.

**5.Rg7+ Kf8 6.Rf7+ Kg8 7.Rg7+ Kf8 8.Rf7+ Kg8 9.Rg7+ Kf8 10.Rf7+ Kg8**

**11.Rg7+ Kf8 12.Rf7+ Kg8 13.Rg7+ Kf8 14.Rf7+Kg8**

- **Springboard**

The notion of a 'springboard' has been discussed several times already in this book (see also Chapter 14). Here is another striking example of a useful foothold.



**1.Qh1+ Kg8 2.Qh7+ Kf8 3.Qh8+ Ke7 4.Qxc8**

**1-0**

White wins the queen. White penetrated the enemy lines via the springboard on h7, playing the queen to the other side by what Nimzowitsch called 'Umgehung'.

### 16.3 Strategic principles

We have seen some interesting things that can take place on the second or seventh rank. Now it is time to formulate some rules with respect to open files, even though they have been discussed extensively in Chapter 14, which dealt with this subject. But we would like to know which files are important and how we can see this. In other words: which factors determine how we can penetrate into the enemy regions? And the second question that needs to be answered is: 'How do we know which file is important and which file isn't?'.

- **Extension of the seventh rank by a weakening**

With the example of the violent entry by the rook, we already briefly signalled that weakening pawn moves can have far-reaching consequences.

□ **Unzicker, Wolfgang**

## ■ Fischer, Robert

Varna ol 1962 (7)



### Lg3?

An ugly mistake, extending his second rank. Fischer does not have much trouble exploiting this weakening.

### 1...Qa7! 2.Kg2 Ra2

Here we see the consequences of the pawn move 1.g3. Not only 3...Rxb2+ is threatened, but also 3...Rxc3.

### 3.KH

After 3.Rxa2 Qxa2, 4.Re2 fails to 4...Rxc3!.



### 3...Rxc3!

Again this move. Unzicker briefly looked at 4.Rxa2 Rf3+ 5.Ke2 Rf2+ 6.Kd3 Qxa2 7.Ra1, but saw that he was lost after 7...Qxb2, and therefore resigned.

- **Bringing on the reserves**

If we have penetrated on the seventh rank, this does not automatically yield us a full point. If one of our major pieces has come to pay a visit to the opponent, it will need assistance. How this support can be lent and what power major pieces can have on the seventh rank, is attractively illustrated in the following fragment.

□ **Botvinnik,Mikhail**

■ **Euwe,Max**

The Hague/Moscow Wch 1948 (12)

Euwe has just played ...f6, with the intention to kick the strong knight off e5. A nasty surprise awaits him.



### 1.Qg3!

Botvinnik leaves the knight right where it is!

### 1...fxe5 2.Qg7

The queen enters via the seventh rank.

### 2...Rf8 3.Rc7

And now she receives the required assistance from the rook.

### 3...Qxc7

More or less forced, since the alternatives do not look particularly rosy either: 3...Qd6 4.Rxb7 d3 looks like a small counterchance, but 5.Ra7 (neither does

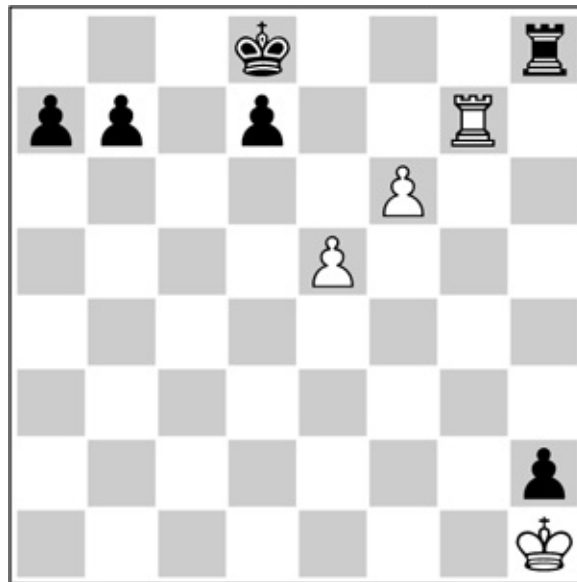
5...d2 help: 6.Ra8+ 7.Rxd8+ Kxd8 8.Qxf8+ Kd7 9.Qf3 is also lost for Black, of course) 6.Qxh7 wins for White, due to the many mate threats.

#### 4.Qxc7

White has obtained a decisive material advantage and converted this into a win in just a few more moves.

- **Seventh rank absolute**

The reader will not be surprised to hear that in many endgames the seventh rank is no insignificant factor. Especially if the enemy king is cut off on the back rank, it may face several specific problems. In his treatment of rook endings, Nimzowitsch already drew our attention to this rule, which he called 'the seventh rank absolute'. Below, we see what he means.



Materially speaking, Black is OK, and besides he has a passed pawn on the second rank, supported by its own rook. But there are several other factors that cause him to lose nonetheless.

#### 1.e6!

White forcefully breaks open the seventh rank.

#### 1...dxe6

Black is obliged to take the pawn, as otherwise White's far advanced connected passed pawns will force a quick decision.

#### 2.Rxb7 Kc8

After a rook move like 2...Rh3 3.Rb8+ Kc7 4.f7, the pawn will queen.

#### 3.Rxa7 Kb8 4.Re7!

Not 4.Rg7?, since after 4...Rf8! 5.f7 the king will be able to leave the fatal back rank with 5...Kc7. After the text move White also threatens 6.f7, but at the same

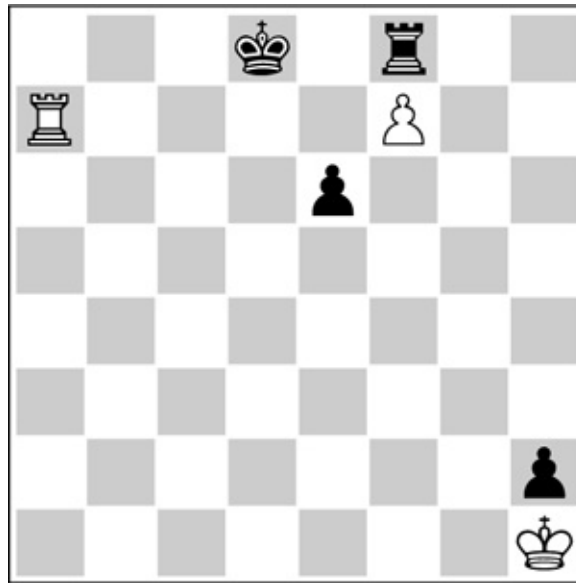
time he keeps the black king imprisoned on the bottom rank.

**4...Kc8 5.f7 Kd8**

Just in time, Black has managed to prevent the threat of 6.Re8+, but since his king is cut off, he will not be able to avoid defeat.

**6.Ra7 Rf8**

The only move that does not lose a rook, but the set-up the black pieces have now been forced to take up is highly awkward.



**7.Kxh2**

And White wins easily. Black cannot move a finger and loses by zugzwang.

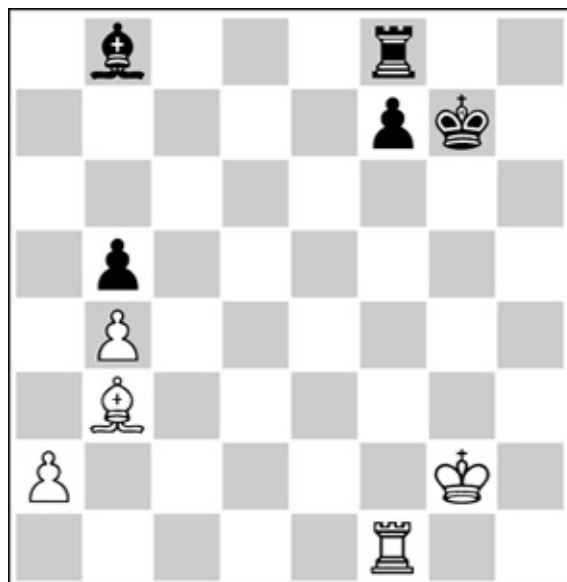
## 16.4 Supply routes along a rank

If there is no possibility to force an entry on the seventh rank, we can avail of another method to penetrate the enemy regions. By moving up a little less far along a file with a rook, we aim for two things:

- we prepare a doubling;
- we want to move to another file via this rank in order to force an entry in this way.

This is how we can succeed in arranging the supply of pieces via a rank. This is what Nimzowitsch called a 'restricted advance' on an open file. The idea is to advance the rook along a file in order to achieve some advantage on a certain rank. In the following schematic position we can see what his idea was.





The purpose of an open file is to force an entry on the seventh rank (see also Chapter 14). In this schematic example this does not work on the f-file, but it will work in another way.

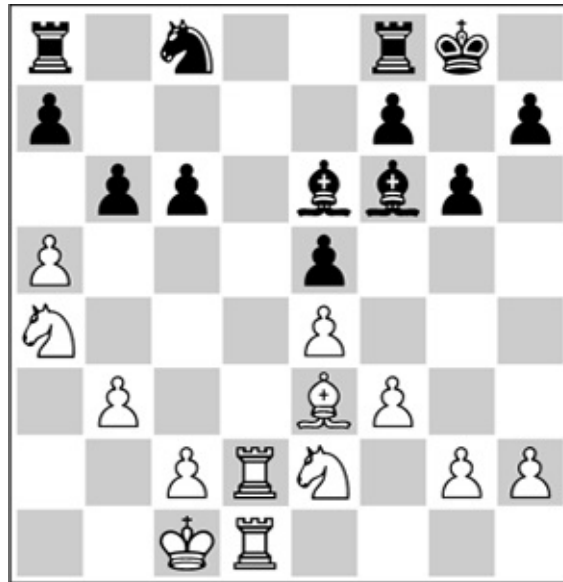
### 1.Rf5

White has set his sights on the b5 pawn, but he also aims to penetrate on the seventh rank via the b-file. With the text move he makes clever use of the f-file. Due to the pressure on f7 Black cannot free himself. The manoeuvre Rf1-f5xb5-b7 is instructive: the rook changes files after ‘selecting’ the rank that is the most interesting to do this on. Nimzowitsch himself has often applied this method in practice.

□ **Nimzowitsch, Aaron**

■ **Pritzl, Axel**

Copenhagen 1922 (4)



In this position White has established heavy pressure on Black's queenside. Moreover, he controls the only open file with his rooks. But for the moment he still cannot achieve very much with this, as Black is controlling all the important entry squares. With his next move White shuffles the cards.

### **1.Rd3!**

On the d-file there is nothing to be gained for the rooks at the moment, so the rook moves up one step (the restricted advance), so it can be moved to the c-file along the third rank.

### **1...bxa5?**

Black lends a helping hand. The passive defensive move 1...Rb8 would have given him better chances to save the game. Now that he has voluntarily taken his own pawn formation apart, he allows Nimzowitsch to bring his 'restricted advance' on the board.

### **2.Rc3**

Also worthy of attention was 2.Nc5.

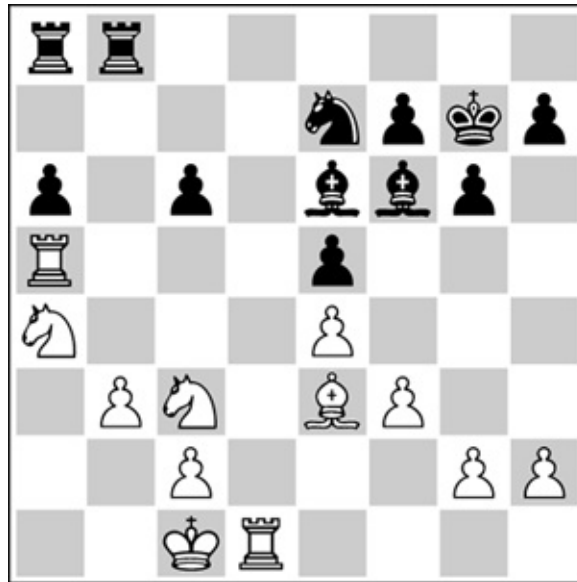
### **2...Ne7 3.Rc5**

A second example of a 'restricted advance'. By operating on the c-file, the rook can seek an advantage on the a-file via the fifth rank.

### **3...Rfb8 4.Nec3a6**

The pawn on a7 could not be maintained in the long run, but now Black loses the b6-square.

### **5.Rxa5 Kg 7**



**6.Nb6! Ra7 7.Nca4 Rab7 8.Rxa6**

The first harvest is gathered, the rest will not be long delayed.

**8...Nc8 9.Nxc8 Rxc8 10.Nc5 Rbc7 11.Rd6 Rd8 12.Rxe6**

**1-0**

Via a rank, a rook can give important support to an offensive against the enemy king. In the following fragment, White utilizes his rook via the third rank to support a hit-and-run attack.

□ **Schuurman, Petra**

■ **Wempe, Joost**

Hoogeveen 2002 (2)



White is clearly better – not only thanks to her extra pawn, but also in view of her attacking chances against the black king.

### 1.Rd3!

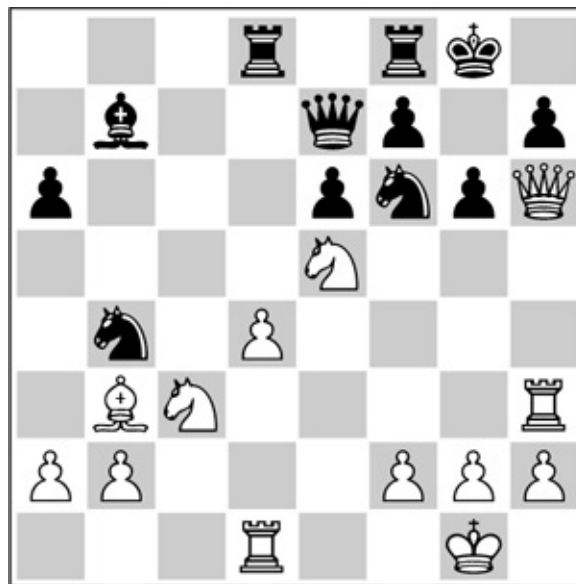
The ‘rook lift’. The rook will be involved in the attack via the third rank.

### 1...Qd6 2.Rh3 Nb4 3.Bg5 g6

3...Qxd4 is met by 4.Rd1 Qc5 5.Bxf6 Bxf6 6.Nd7, winning. The alternative 3...h6 would, of course, be asking for trouble. After 4.Bxh6! gxh6 5.Qe3!, the white attack is irresistible.

### 4.Rd1 Rad8 5.Qe3 Nfd5 6.Bxe7 Qxe7 7.Qh6 Nf6

Obviously, 7...f6 fails to 8.Nxg6.



### 8.Ng4! Nh5

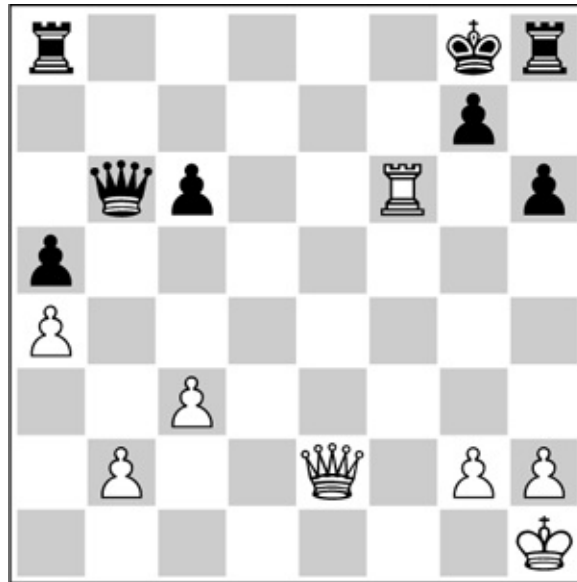
This loses in elementary fashion. It is a pity that Black does not cooperate to create a more attractive finish, which could have come about after 8...Rfe8. Then White would have replied with the subtle 9.a3! Nbd5 10.Ne4!, with mate to follow.

### 9.Rxh5!

**1-0**

After 9...gxh5, 10.Nf6+ decides.

It doesn't happen very often that a supply of pieces can be achieved via the sixth rank. Here is a typical example:



White has invested a rook in the attack. His f6 rook is of crucial importance.

**1.Qe6+ Kh7 2.Rxh6+ gxh6 3.Qf7#1-0**

An elegant epaulette mate!

In the following game, two white rooks pay a visit to the sixth rank. The activity of these Twin Towers is transformed into a lethal mating attack.

□ **Kasparov, Garry**

■ **Gavrikov, Viktor**

Frunze 1981 (1)



Black has done something wrong somewhere, and now it is time to pay.

**1.Nd6!**

Thus White increases his influence within the enemy lines.

**1...Qxd6 2.Rxc6 Qd8**

In case of 2...Qe5 3.Nd3 Qf5, Kasparov indicates that Black can hardly move a piece after 4.Rd6!.

**3.Qc2 a5 4.Rc1 Re8?!**

A new inaccuracy, even though the alternative was not very appealing either.

After 4...Bb7 5.Rc7 Bxg2 6.Kxg2 Bb6 7.Rc6, White has a huge advantage with his strong knight against Black's bad bishop.



**5.Bd5!?**

This move contains an extremely interesting thought, which we will discover shortly. At the same time White anticipates 5...Bb7?, as in reply to that move he has prepared an elegant combination: 6.Bxf7+!, and after 6...Kxf7 there follows 7.Rc7+ Re7 (or 7...Kg8 8.Qb3+ Kh8 9.Qf7, with a decisive invasion along the seventh rank) 8.Qb3+ Kf8 (8...Kf6 9.R1c6+ Bxc6 10.Rxc6+ Kg5 11.Nh3+!, and Black gets mated by force) 9.Ne6+ Rxe6 10.Qxe6 Qf6 11.Qxf6+ gxf6 12.Rxh7, and the white rooks will deal with the rest of the job together.

5...Bd7 is no defence either after 6.Rc7 Rc8 (unfortunately for Black, 6...Bb6? fails to 7.Bxf7+! Kxf7 8.Qf5+ Ke7 9.Qe6+, and White wins) 7.Rxc8 Bxc8 (7...Qxc8 also loses after 8.Bxf7+ Kxf7 9.Qb3+ Be6 10.Rxc8 Bxb3 11.Rxe8 Kxe8 12.axb3, and the ending must be winning for White) 8.Qc7 and again, White will force a decisive entry on the seventh rank.

**5...Bb6 6.Qb3**

Kasparov could hardly restrain himself. Indeed, 6.Bxf7+!? is also very

promising after 6...Kxf7 7.Qxh7 d3! (not 7...Bd7? on account of 8.Rg6 Rg8 9.Nh5 and Black can pack it in right away) 8.Nxd3!, maintaining the attack.  
**6...Re7**



How should White continue? Kasparov has a highly original solution in mind. Pay attention to his bishop during the next few moves!

**7.Bf3!**

This looks highly peculiar. What is White's plan?

**7...Re5**

Black does not realize what is hanging over his head. He has seen that 7...Bb7 8.Nd5! Bxc6 9.Nxe7+ Qxe7 10.Rxc6 would put him in a passive position. But after the text move White can carry out his idea.

**8.Bh5**

This must have been the last thing that Gavrikov expected. Again, the f7-point is the Achilles' heel in his position.

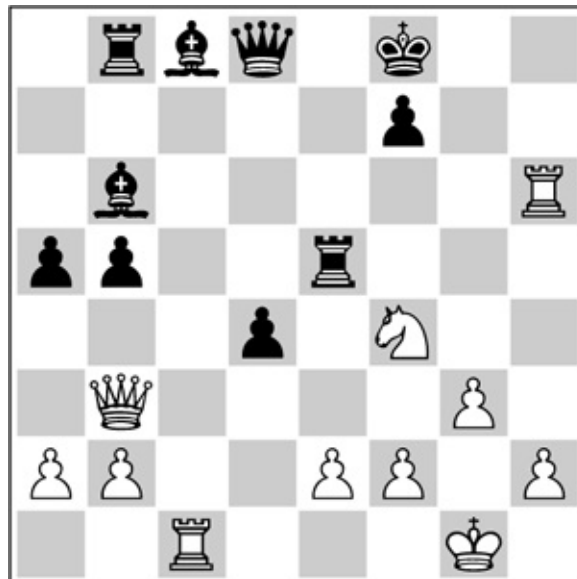
**8...g6**



### 9.Bxg6!

A logical consequence of the preceding moves, but it is great how Kasparov has calculated all this in advance. Not so good was 9.Nxg6? in view of 9...a4!.

**9...hxg6 10.Rxg6+ Kf8 11.Rh6**



### 11...Ke7

The king tries to hide in the centre. On the flank it would have been caught immediately: 11...Kg7? 12.Rh7+!, followed by mate in two. The other attempt at salvation, 11...Rg5, would have run into a nice demonstration of 'sixth rank play': 12.Rcc6! Rb7! (very pretty is the combination after 12...Kg7? 13.Rh7+! Kxh7 14.Qxf7+ Rg7. Now White gives mate with 15.Rh6+! Kxh6 16.Qh5#) 13.Rh8+! Rg8 14.Rch6 (now the threat is 15.Ng6+!) 14...Qg5 15.Rg6!, deciding



the battle.

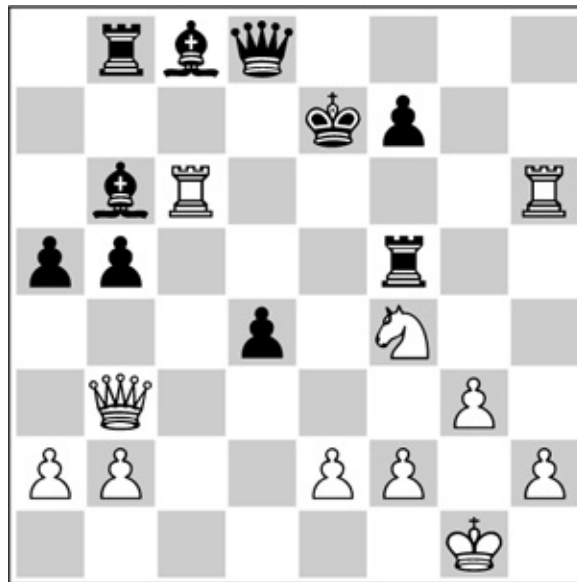
Finally, 11...Qd7 loses to 12.Rcc6! Bc7 and now the subtle 13.Qf3!, a move which is hard to find.

### 12.Rcc6

This is always the standard move with which White adds new stimuli to his initiative. The rooks on the sixth rank exert a tremendous influence.

### 12...Rf5

Black had to give extra protection to the f7-point, as becomes clear after 12...Bd7 13.Ng6+! fxe6 14.Rh7+ Ke8 15.Qf7#.



### 13.Qf3!

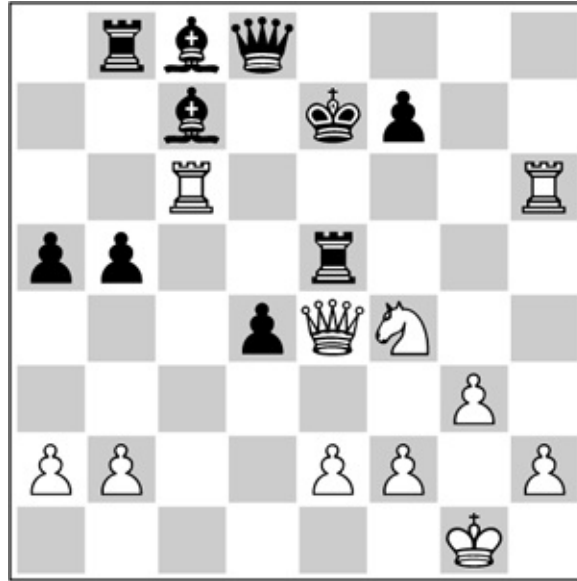
Another clever attacking move. Here, the plan with 13.Ng6+ was not the best. After 13...fxg6 14.Rh7+ Kf8 15.Rh8+ Kg7 16.Rxd8 Bxd8, White doesn't seem to have much, but there is still something in the position! White would have had to find 17.Rxg6+!, however. After 17...Kxg6 18.Qg8+ Kh6 19.Qxd8, the black pieces cooperate so badly that he must lose more material by force.

### 13...Bc7

It goes without saying that on 13...Re5, White had planned 14.Ng6+! again.

### 14.Qe4+ Re5

After 14...Be5, White regains his piece with the simple 15.Nd3, while the black king still hasn't reached safety. Now White can finally carry out his long-prepared combination.



**15.Ng6+!**

At the right moment the seventh rank is forced open as well. Now the supremacy of White's major pieces is more than Black can handle.

**15...fxg6 16.Rh7+ Kf8 17.Qxg6**

Black resigned. He will be mated.

It is even possible for a rook to participate in an attack from the fourth rank. Here is a magnificent example by Kasparov's greatest rival – a game which Kasparov ranked among his own favourites.

□ **Karpov,Anatoly**

■ **Hort,Vlastimil**

Moscow 1971



**22.Rg4!**

In this position, the fourth rank is very useful for White – for defensive as well as attacking purposes.

Black might now have considered taking on h2, since he will come under heavy fire anyway.

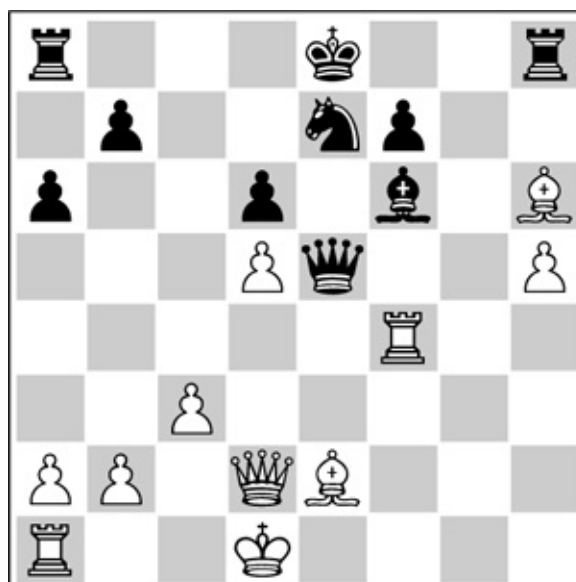
**22...Qf6 23.h4! Qf5 24.Rb4!**

Preventing queenside castling, which would now lose the queen after 25.Bg4.

**24...Bf6 25.h5 Ne7**

Not 25...Ne5? 26.Rf4!, and Black loses the bishop on f6!

**26.Rf4! Qe5**



**27.Rf3!**

Now the threat is 28.Bf4. The versatile rook is driving Black crazy!

**27...Nxd5 28.Rd3 Rxb6**

Playing for tricks: 29.Qxh6 Bg5 and 30...Ne3+.

**29.Rxd5 Qe4**

29...Qe6 30.Rxd6 Qxd6 31.Qxd6 Rd8 32.Qxd8+ would lead to a hopeless endgame for Black.

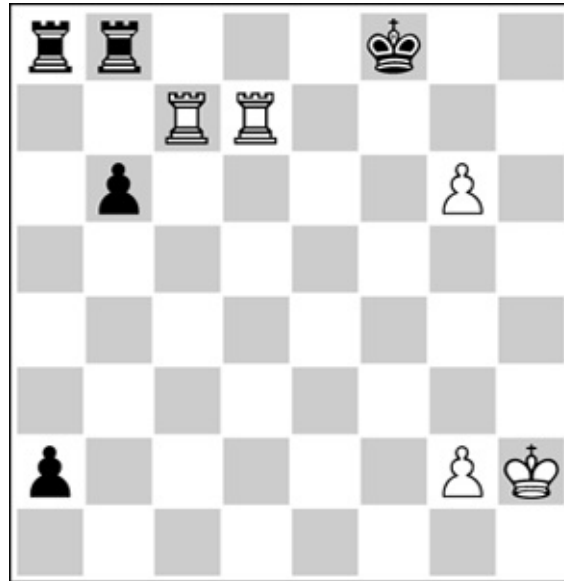
Now comes the sixth, and decisive, rook switch:

**30.Rd3! Qh1+ 31.Kc2 Qxa1 32.Qxh6 Be5 33.Qg5**

And in this hopeless position, Hort overstepped the time-limit.

## Exercises

16.1



White has the ‘odious’ g-pawn, as was discussed in the study material of this chapter. So should he settle for a draw?

[Solution](#)

16.2



The white queen has invaded the seventh rank via the only open file. However, Black has put up a solid barrier that appears hard to breach. How can White make progress?

[Solution](#)

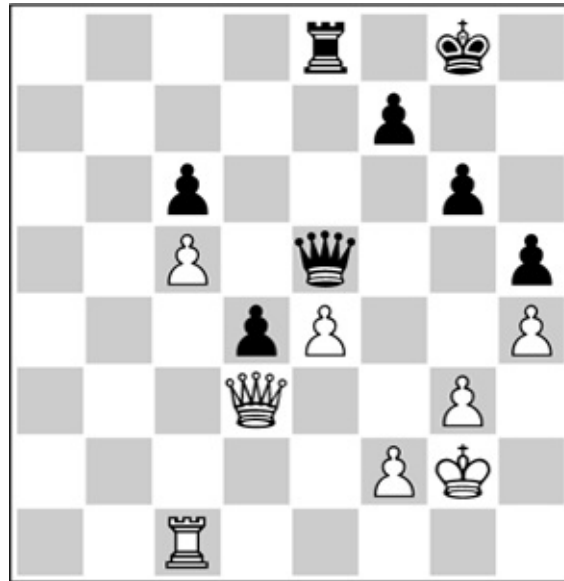
16.3



White is better thanks to his space advantage, but it is hard to see how he should make progress. He may sacrifice a pawn with **31.b5**. After **31...Nxb5**, which piece would you use to take back? And what have you planned if you have invaded with your rook on c7 and you run into the reply **...Rc8**?

[Solution](#)

16.4



White's pawn on e4 is hanging. Therefore he decides on **34.f3**. It is clear that his second rank is now seriously weakened, and Black tries to exploit this. The follow-up was interesting: **34...Ra8 35.Qc4 Ra3 36.Rd1 Rc3 37.Qa4** Now answer the following questions:

- a) What would Black play after **37.Qxd4**?
- b) What was Black's strong continuation after the text move?

[Solution](#)



## Chapter 17

# A piece out of play

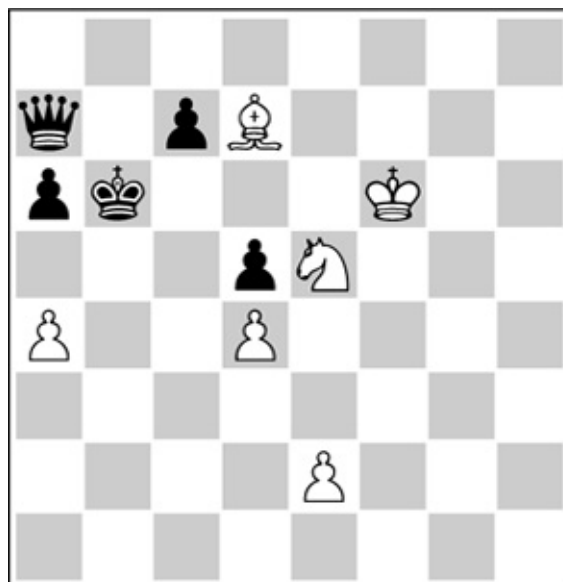
### 17.1 Introduction

Outsiders often talk about the chess world being chiefly a collection of eccentrics. Even though the game of chess enjoys a positive image, outsiders will always express their surprise at the para-psychologist and the yoghurt cups from the notorious World Championship match between Karpov and Kortchnoi in Baguio City (Philippines) in 1978.

Even so, the extravagant behaviour of top players appeals to the imagination of non-chess players. Whether professional players are pleased with this, is a moot question. They are already trying hard to get rid of the stuffy image of chess as a boring game that is played only by elderly gentlemen smoking big cigars.

What I do know is that he who is once ‘caught’ by the game, will be ‘lost’ forever. The player who likes the game will never throw his chess board out of the window, even though he may often feel an irresistible urge to do so, on one of those days when he has blundered horribly in a completely winning position. The true chess player is addicted to the game, even though ‘you never get used to losing’, as Donner used to say. Playing over a beautiful endgame study, or solving one, stirs up powerful emotions, which will soon help a ‘broken man’ back on his feet.

Have a look at the following study:



Study by Andrew, 1925

Clearly, White has the advantage in spite of the material disadvantage of two pieces versus queen. The black king is badly placed, but especially the queen is in a tight spot.

With his following move White forces both black pieces into even greater inactivity.

**1.a5+! Kb7**

Forced, since after 1...Kxa5 2.Nc6+ Kb6 3.Nxa7 Kxa7, White wins the ensuing ending easily with 4.Ke5.

**2.Nc6**

The queen is literally and figuratively driven into a corner.

**2...Qa8**

As we can also see elsewhere in this book, at the moment a piece is out of play, the opponent will try to re-introduce it. Such is the case here: Black threatens to escape with his queen, after which he would be able to cash in on his material advantage. But White has a fantastic parade in mind:

**3.Kg7!!**

And Black is in zugzwang. The only thing he can do is give the queen for only one of Whites minor pieces.

Solving studies might just be the best remedy for a horrible defeat. Especially if you manage to find the solution by yourself, this will boost your confidence.

Besides, it may also make you realize why you play chess in the first place!

In the above study we have seen something of instructive value. A piece was out

of play, and White exploited this detail well. Steinitz already told us that a piece which is not on the battlefield, is out of play. With the battlefield, we mean the part of the board where the battle takes place. This forces the other side to act energetically, if he wants to take profit from this temporary advantage. The following game aptly illustrates this battle method.

□ **Kotov,Alexander**

■ **Taimanov,Mark**

Zurich ct 1953 (11)



About this position, Kotov writes in his book *Play like a Grandmaster*: ‘Black’s position looks quite reasonable, but it has one outstanding defect. His knight at a5 is badly placed and has little prospect of getting to a good square. White plans to exploit this by playing all his pieces to the K-side in order to work with an extra piece there.’

In his other book, *Think like a Grandmaster*, Kotov describes his line of thinking in more detail: ‘In deciding on a plan, or more accurately how to continue from here, I set myself an aim that was not very complicated, but was strategically correct. I argued that I could not exploit the knight’s position directly, so I would have to exploit the fact that it was cut off from the kingside, as in attacking the king I would have an extra piece at my disposal compared to the defender. Simple and clear. Now follow how this important positional factor was used in the game.’ Whatever the case may be, Kotov is able to comfortably carry out his above-mentioned plan, and his assessment is proved right.

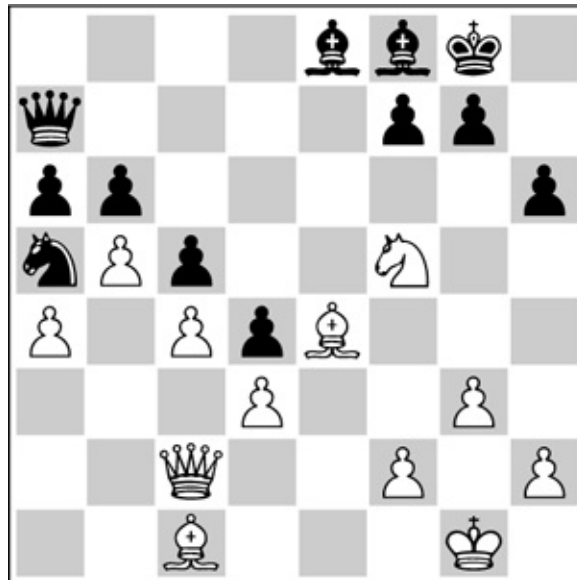
**1.Nh4!**

With this knight sortie White gives the signal for the storm that is to break out on the kingside.

**1 ...a6 2.a4 Qa7 3.Nf5 Bf8 4.Ne4**

White is careful with piece exchanges, but he is prepared to exchange these knights. The black knight on f6 is an important defender, and at the same time White vacates the e4-square for his bishop.

**4...Nxe4 5.Bxe4 b6**



**6.Qd1!**

The minor pieces are already more or less pointed at the black king, now only the queen has to join them.

**6...axb5 7.axb5 Bd7 8.Qh5 Be6**

Black cannot permit himself the exchange 8...Bxf5; for example, 9.Qxf5 g6 10.Qd5 Kg7 11.Bf4 does not inspire much confidence. White's powerful bishop pair can be deployed over the entire board.

**9.Bf4**

Both players overlook a curious tactical intermezzo. The right move was 9.Kg2, to leave the vulnerable back rank with his king.



### 9...Nb3?!

Finally Black's unfortunate knight puts in an appearance. But it is too late. For the time being, the knight only attacks 'empty' squares, which White has abandoned a few moves ago, whereas White has a concrete target: the black king. At the moment, the knight is not capable of operating in the vicinity of White's king, mainly because the white army is fully mobilized.

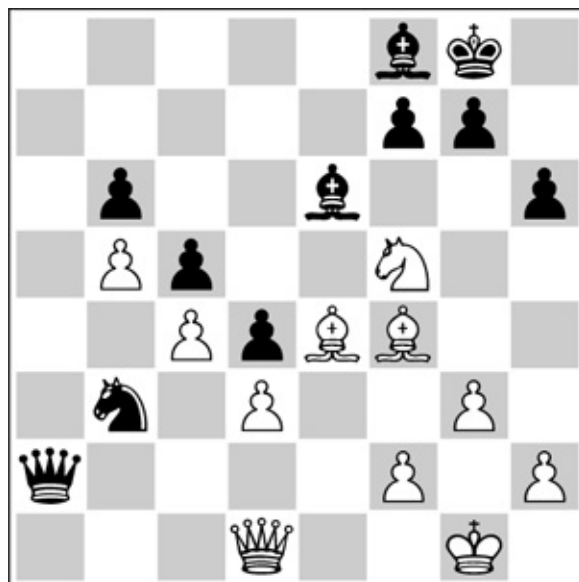
However, there was a hidden possibility with which Black could have turned things around: 9...Nxc4! 10.dxc4 Qa1+ 11.Kg2 Bxc4, and suddenly Black has launched a strong attack on the white king. The pressure that White exerts on the black king is just enough to allow him to escape with perpetual check: 12.Nxh6+ (certainly not 12.h4?!, as 12...Qf1+ 13.Kh2 Qxf2+ 14.Bg2 g6 15.Nxh6+ Bxh6 16.Qxh6 Bd5 is winning for Black) 12...gxh6 13.Qg4+ Bg7 14.Qc8+ Bf8 15.Qg4+ with move repetition.

### 10.Qd1

White is not afraid to enter an endgame. By the way, here also, 10.Kg2 deserved attention.

### 10...Qa2

After 10...Qa1 11.Qxa1 Nxa1 12.Bc7, pawn b6 will be lost, after which Black is left with a hopeless endgame.



### 11.h4

Kotov is calling up reinforcements in order to further besiege the black king's position.

### 11...Na1

The knight is still wandering aimlessly in no man's land.

### 12.h5 Nc2 13.Be5

Slowly but surely, White manoeuvres his pieces in front of Black's rather deserted king's position. The threats have already become so strong that the black player has no defence against them anymore.

### 13...Qb2

After a move like 13...Na3, there follows 14.Qg4 Qd2 15.Bf4 Qe1+ 16.Kg2, which would already force an immediate decision.

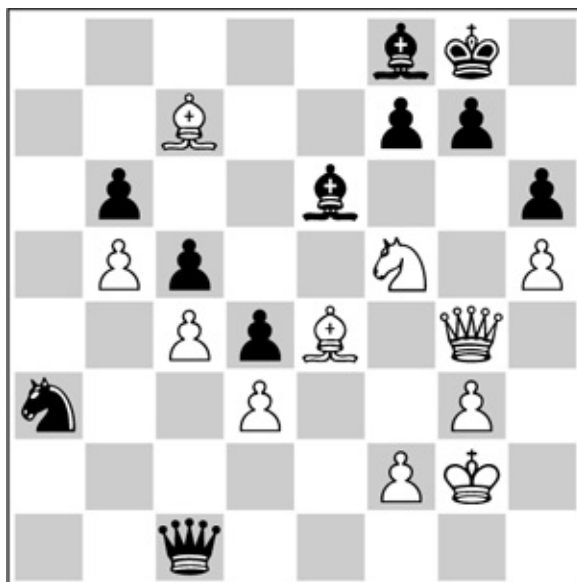
### 14.Bc7

The problem for Black is not only the menacing attack on his king, but also the weak b6 pawn on the queenside. By the way, White could have made this bishop move one move earlier. However, the immediate attempt to catch Black napping with 14.Qg4 did have a drawback: with 14...Qc1+ 15.Kh2 Qd2 Black can hold for the time being.

### 14...Na3 15.Qg4

The white player still keeps confidence in his attack on the king. There was no argument against 15.Bxb6 either.

### 15...Qc1+ 16.Kg2

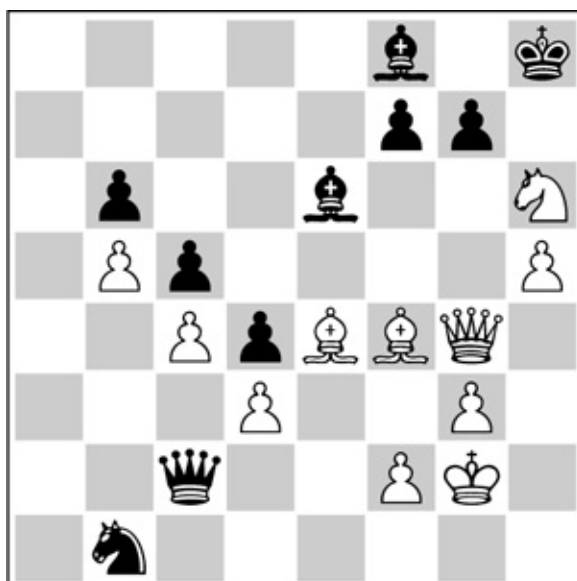


### 16...Nb1

Kotov here writes that ‘such moves are clear evidence that a catastrophe is near.’ Bronstein, who comments on this game in his invaluable tournament book, cannot help expressing a little irony: ‘The knight wanders forlornly about the corner of the board, as if trying to perform the well-known Knight’s Tour, while White methodically increases the pressure on the black king’s position.’ Incidentally, also after 16...Nc2 17.Qe2, there would have been no salvation for Black.

### 17.Bf4 Nd2?

A grave mistake, which ends the game immediately. How dangerous White’s initiative already was, is proved by the following beautiful and instructive attacking sequence, starting after 17...Qc2 18.Nxh6+ Kh8:



19.Nxf7+! (a surprising knight sacrifice) 19...Bxf7 20.Qf5 Bg8 21.h6!.

**18.Qe2**

**1-0**

Winning the piece is now the simplest way to enforce capitulation.

The crystal-clear strategy displayed by Kotov in this game appealed to me when I saw it for the first time. He regards the black knight on a5 as a liability, and on that basis he transfers all his pieces as quickly as possible to the other wing, convinced that the preponderance of one extra piece should produce something concrete for him. Thus, he labelled the kingside as the battlefield. In the game Smyslov-Fischer in Chapter 20, we will witness a similar strategy.

In any case it is clear that this concept is applicable in more than one type of position. The following game illustrates this.

□ **Capablanca, Jose**

■ **Bogoljubow, Efim**

London 1922 (6)



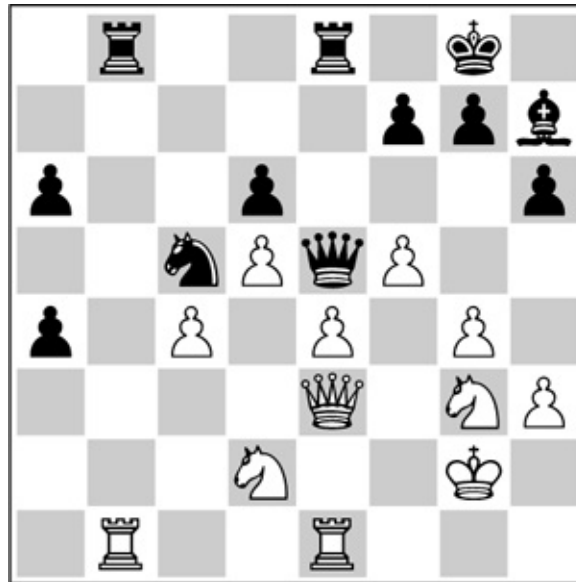
Here Capablanca decides to exile the black bishop to a faraway place.

**1.g4! Bg6 2.f5 Bh7**

Here Capablanca must have thought: 'Right, that piece won't do anything on that side of the board for the next twenty moves'.

**3.Ng3 Qe5 4.Kg2 Rab8 5.Rab1**

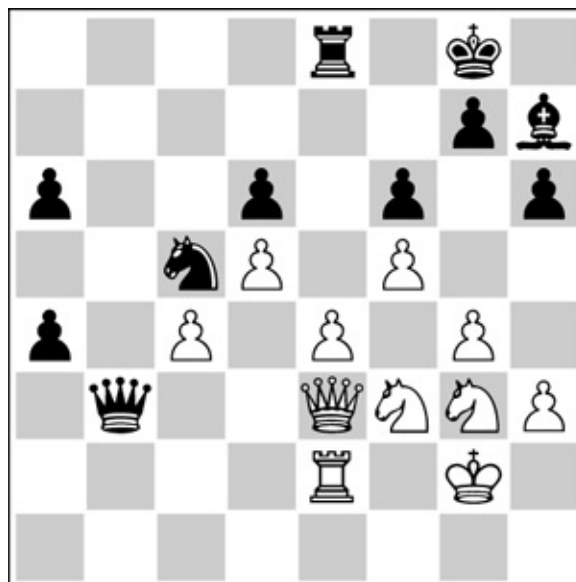




### 5...f6

It will do no harm to spend some time studying the consequences of this pawn move. In the long run Black hopes to 'bring the h7 bishop to life' with the manoeuvre ...Bh7-g8-f7-e8, after which it will rejoin the battle on the queenside. But for this he will have to make a huge concession: the surrender of the e6-square gives White a new angle to handle this position. Black cannot prevent a white knight from jumping to this square, where it will be so dominant that it must be exchanged. Then the protected passed pawn on e6 will be the new weapon in White's arsenal.

**6.Nf3 Rb2+ 7.Rxb2 Qxb2+ 8.Re2 Qb3**



At first sight, Black is not doing so badly. He has a strong knight on c5, the only

open file is in his possession, and he has an a-pawn that may give White some headaches. Capablanca himself indicates that the black pieces have more freedom than the white ones. Moreover, White has weak pawns on c4 and e4, and if there were no other factors playing a role here, White would not be in good shape.

Nevertheless, Black is on the verge of losing. On the queenside he is practically playing with a piece less, as his bishop on h7 cannot assist its fellow pieces on the battlefield. And this sole factor is of overriding importance here.

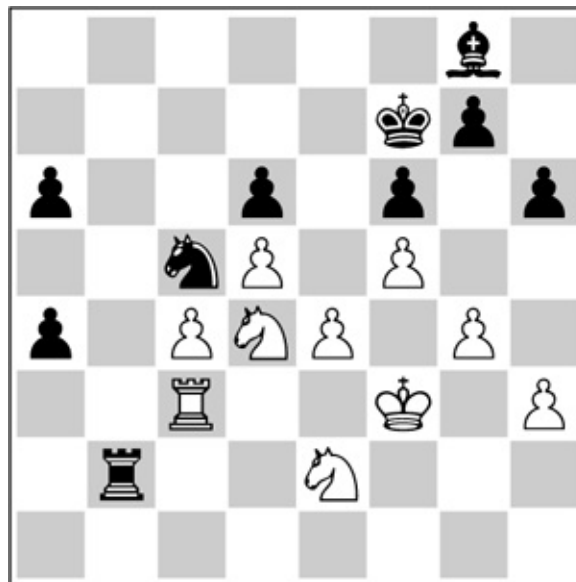
### **9.Nd4!**

White gives up the c-pawn in order to activate his pieces. The knight strives for the square e6, as we predicted.

### **9...Qxe3**

Black could hardly go for 9...Qxc4 10.Ne6 Rb8 11.Nxc5 dxc5 12.d6, when the white d-pawn becomes much too dangerous.

### **10.Rxe3 Rb8 11.Rc3 Kf7 12.Kf3 Rb2 13.Nge2 Bg8**



### **14.Ne6**

White places his knight on the coveted square.

### **14...Nb3**

After the exchange of knights, with a protected passed white pawn on e6, the black bishop would have no hope of ever being able to make an appearance on the queenside.

With 14...Nxe4 Black would be jumping from the frying pan into the fire: after 15.Kxe4 Rxe2+ 16.Kd3 Rh2 17.Kd4 h5 (exchanging rooks with 17...Rd2+ 18.Rd3 Rxd3+ 19.Kxd3 also results in a hopeless endgame) 18.c5, White breaks through, and soon he will manage to escort a pawn to the other side. Note how

hard it is for the black bishop to join the battle.

**15.c5!**

Here also, White comes up with this breakthrough.

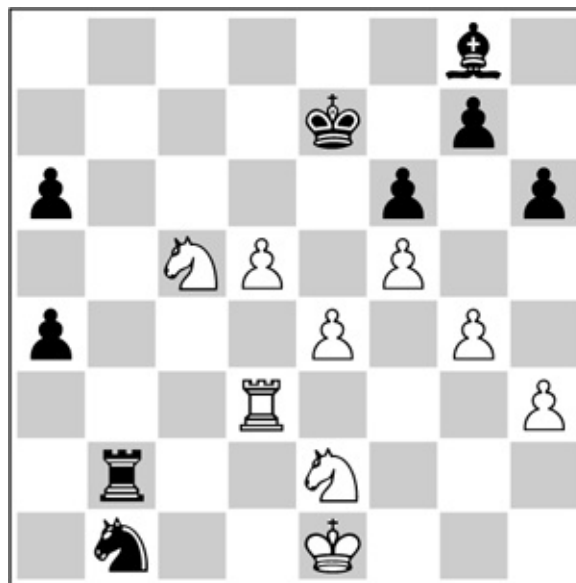
**15...dxc5 16.Nxc5 Nd2+**

After 16...Nxc5, Black will soon be in insurmountable trouble: 17.Rxc5 Rb3+ 18.Kf4 a3 19.Ra5, and the white pieces cooperate much better than the black ones.

**17.Kf2**

White must remain on his guard. After 17.Ke3? a3, 18.Rxa3? is not possible in view of 18...Nc4+.

**17...Ke7 18.Ke1 Nb1 19.Rd3**



**19...a3?**

Black does not wish to part with his foremost a-pawn, as then he would have no counter play left at all. As a consequence, White's d-pawn now also becomes a killer, which will soon be Black's undoing. But also after 19...Kd6 20.Nxa4 Rb4 21.Nac3 Nxc3 22.Nxc3, White would slowly make progress. Still, in that case Black could still have put up some tough resistance.

**20.d6+Kd8 21.Nd4**

The bishop on g8 has actually obtained an open diagonal, but it will not give Black much pleasure.

**21...Rb6**

Also after 21...a2? 22.Nc6+ Kc8 23.d7+ Kc7 24.d8Q+, Black is finished.

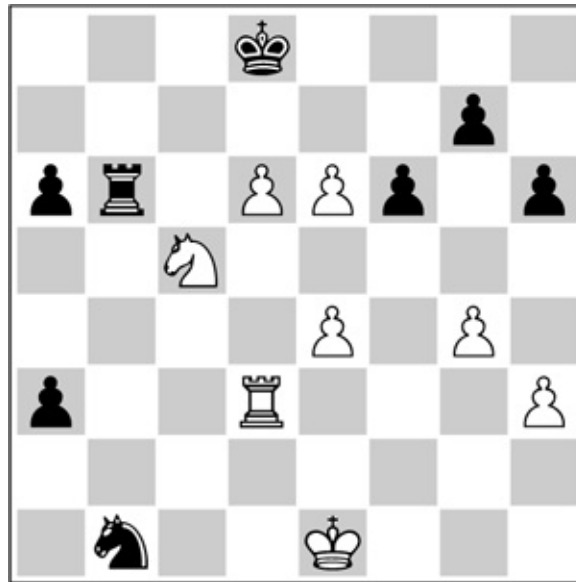
**22.Nde6+**

Even stronger was 22.d7.

**22...Bxe6**

The bishop breathes its last. White's two connected passed pawns decide the battle.

**23.fxe6**



**23...Rb8**

Now 23...a2 would be too late after 24.e7+ Ke8 25.d7+ Kxe7 26.d8Q+, and Black will be mated.

**24.e7+ Ke8 25.Nxa6**

And Black surrendered.

After 25...a2 26.Nxb8 a1Q 27.d7+ Kxe7  
28.d8Q+ Kf7 29.Qd5+ forces the mate.

Coincidentally, that strong e6-square from the previous fragment also plays the leading part in another game by Capablanca. The similarity between both games is striking.

□ **Capablanca, José**

■ **Ragozin, Viacheslav**

Moscow 1935 (6)



**1.gxf6 gxf6 2.Ng7!**

In this way, White brings the knight to the strong e6-square, where it will be just as dominating as in the previous example.

**2...Bd7 3.h5**

First White slowly strengthens his position.

**3...Rac8 4.h6 Kb8 5.Rg1 Rf7 6.Rb1 Qf8 7.Be2 Ka8 8.Bh5 Re7 9.Qa2 Qd8 10.Bd2 Na4 11.Qb3 Nb6 12.a4**



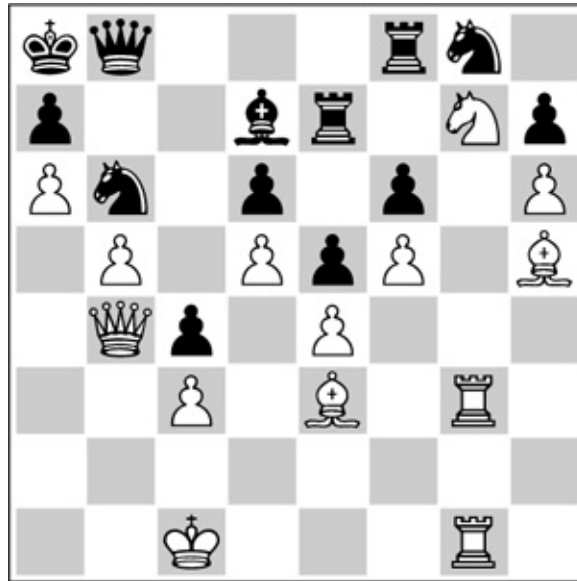
**12...Rb8**

It is too dangerous for Black to hand his opponent an open file in front of his king. After 12...Bxa4 13.Qa2 Bd7, the strong 14.Ne6 Bxe6 15.fxe6 follows, and Black is tied hand and foot. Apart from the latent threats along the a- and b-file,

Bh5-f7 is Black's first worry.

**13.a5 Nc8 14.Qa2 Qf8 15.Be3 b6 16.a6 Qd8 17.Kd2 Qf8 18.Rb2 Qd8 19.Qb1 b5 20.cxb5 Nb6 21.Qa2 c4 22.Qa3 Qc7 23.Kc1 Rf8 24.Rbg2 Qb8 25.Qb4 Rd8 26.Rg3 Rf8**

Now that Black is completely tied up, White finishes the job in style.



**27.Ne6!**

Finally Capablanca plays this move, which was hanging over Black's head like the Sword of Damocles. The knight threatens to spread death and destruction in the black camp and therefore has to be eliminated right away.

**27...Bxe6**

The slaughter after 27...Rc8 28.Bxb6! axb6 is illustrative: 29.a7! Qxa7 30.Kb2, and White wins.

Even worse is 28...Bxe6: 29.fxe6 axb6, and now White has two ways to win:

A) 30.Rg7 Ka7 31.Rxe7+Nxe7 32.Rg7 Qc7 33.Rxh7;

B) Even after 30.Rxg8, Black is completely finished, although this would require some heavy-duty calculation: 30...Rxg8 31.Rxg8 Qxg8 32.Qxd6 Qg1+ 33.Kb2 Qf2+ 34.Ka3 Qc5+ 35.Qxc5 bxc5 36.Bf7, and the white pawn avalanche is irresistible.

**28.dxe6 Rc7**

There is no decent defence left.

**29.Qxd6 Ne7 30.Rd1**

**1-0**

## **17.2 Implementing a long-term plan**

That even a slightly misplaced piece can backfire on you in a game, will hopefully be clear by now. That it can even cost you the game is less obvious.

During my search for examples the following incident came to my mind. When I had qualified for the first time for the Dutch Championship in Leeuwarden, 1981, I kept my eyes and ears open during my first encounter with Holland's then top players. I tried to watch as many post-mortems as possible to increase my understanding. I remember drawing up a chair at the post-mortem of the following game, and witnessing how the Dutch master Rob Hartoch was being made something of a laughing-stock by the greatest loudmouth among the chess players in our country: the late grandmaster Jan Hein Donner. In his youth Hartoch had been considered the crown prince of Dutch chess. Already at the age of fifteen he was of master strength thanks to his good strategic understanding, and his fine shared 2nd place in the junior world championship of 1965 seemed to promise him a bright future.

□ **Donner, Jan Hein**

■ **Hartoch, Robert**

Leeuwarden ch-NED 1981 (3)



In this position, Black has conceived the plan of exploiting the weak square b4.

**1...N8d7 2.Rg1 Nb8 3.Raa1 Na6 4.Raf1 Nb4 5.Bb1**

After a time-consuming manoeuvre, the knight has arrived on b4, where it is doing practically nothing. All White's pieces are on the kingside, and he has his hands free to build up a dangerous initiative there.

**5...Kh8**



Here Donner started to make fun of Black's action. With a certain disdain he uttered words like: 'The battle takes place on the kingside and now you're going to take a knight from its defensive post on f8 and simply put it out of play on the other side of the board!'

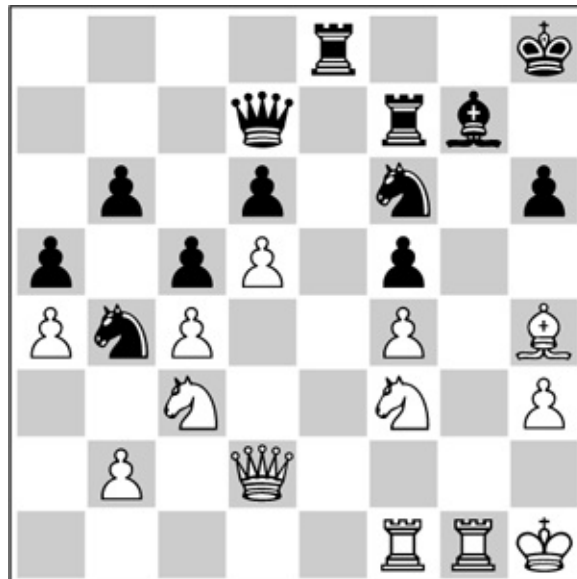
**6.Nh2?!**

But Donner hardly manages to make good use of the opportunity himself. Probably he should have played 6.Re1.

**6...Re3 7.Bf2 R3e7 8.g4 Rf7**

Here 8...Ba6 9.b3 Ne4 10.Nxe4 fxe4 would have given Black some counterplay.

**9.gxf5 Bxf5 10.Bxf5 gxf5 11.Nf3 h6 12.Bh4 Qd7**



And the game was unexpectedly agreed drawn. White would be clearly better



after 13.Bxf6 Rxf6 14.Rg3 Kh7 15.Rfg1 Rf7 16.Rg6, followed by the knight manoeuvre to c3, after which Black will pay for his misplacing of the knight on b4.

The strange thing is that Hartoch had already learned this lesson from an earlier confrontation with the same opponent.

□ **Dormer, Jan Hein**

■ **Hartoch, Robert**

Wijk aan Zee 1973 (15)



A well-known position from the Benoni, the black player's beloved opening.

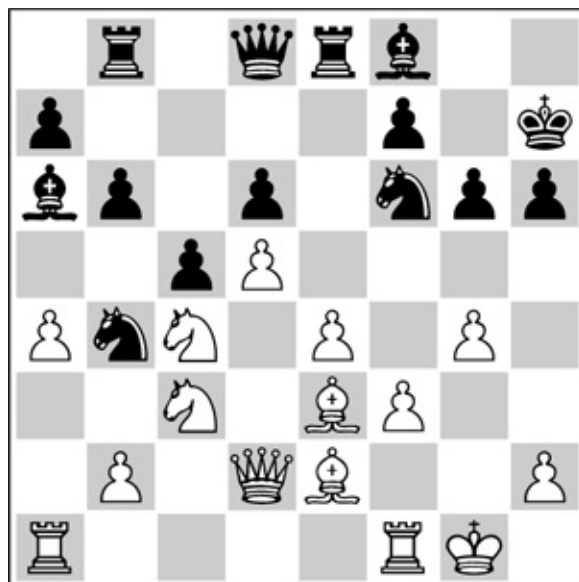
**1.a4**

White weakens the b4-square and invites his opponent to play his knight to this 'beautiful' square. But actually, Donner is hoping that the knight will be out of play there, as soon as the struggle will be concentrated on the kingside. And that is exactly what he is going to do here!

**1...Nb4 2.Nc4 Bf8**

If a Benoni player has to make such moves, this is generally a bad sign.

**3.Bg5 h6 4.Be3 b6 5.Qd2 Kh7 6.g4 Ba6**



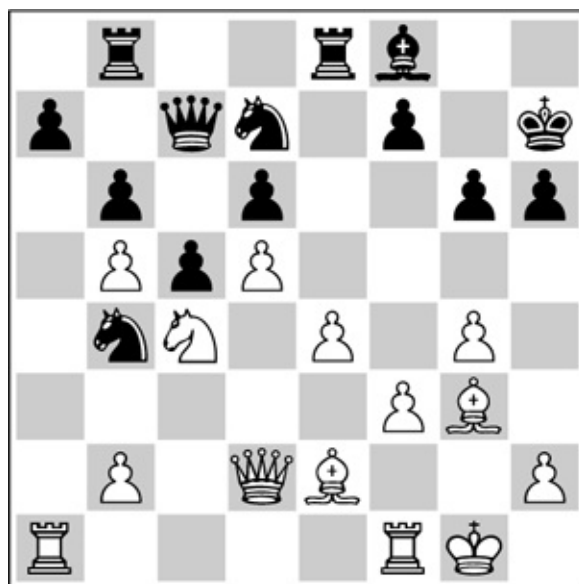
**7.Nb5!**

He does not allow his beautiful knight on c4 to be exchanged for a bishop that is doing nothing.

**7...Qd7 8.Bf4 Bxb5 9.axb5 Qc7**

Black can never take on b5 in view of the discovered attack Nxd6.

**10.Bg3 Nd7**



**11.Ra3!**

A deep move. Not only does Donner make a doubling on the a-file possible, but most of all he hopes to employ the rook along the third rank at the moment when he takes action on the kingside.

**11...Ne5?**

Panic. Black should have 'passed' with 11...Ra8, although then too he would have had a hard time of it.

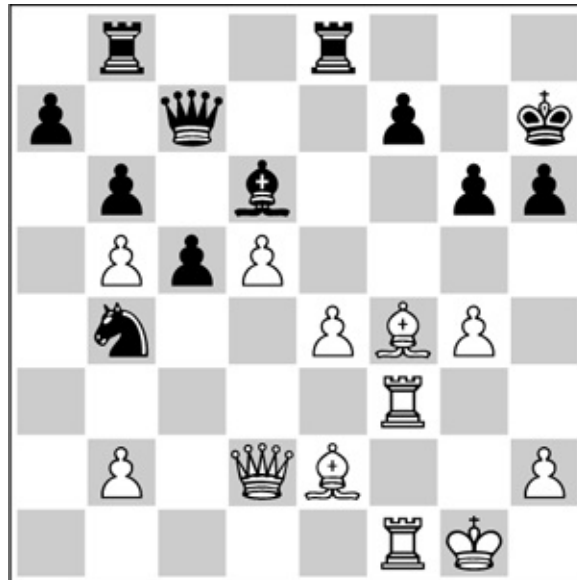
**12.Nxe5dxe5 13.f4**

Thus White has obtained the target he needed to open files, diagonals and ranks.

**13...Bd6 14.Raf3**

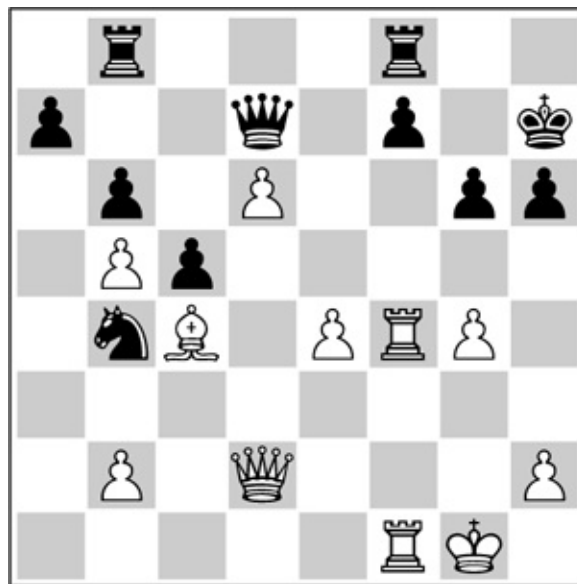
14.fxe5 Bxe5 15.Raf3 was slightly more accurate.

**14...exf4 15.Bxf4**



**15...Rxe4**

After this new mistake, the game is immediately over. But also after 15...Bxf4 16.Rxf4 Rf8 17.d6Qd7 18.Bc4!,



Analysis diagram

Black would not have survived the white initiative. In this line, too, the absence of the black knight from the kingside is heavily felt.

**16.Bxd6 Qxd6 17.Rxf7+ Kg8 18.Qxh6**

**1-0**

This leads us to the question how we are to exploit such an advantage. After a piece has been misplaced, the other player should point his arrows at the other wing. As a rule, he does not have to fear piece exchanges.

In the following game, a bishop is rendered inactive for a large part of the game. It is highly instructive how the great strategist Petrosian manages to maintain this advantage until deep in the endgame, and to convert it into other advantages.

RE 25.10 (AOS)

□ **Petrosian, Tigran**

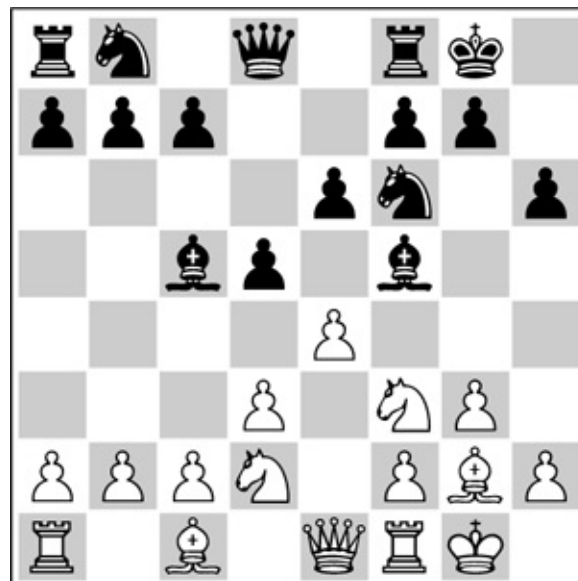
■ **Euwe, Max**

Zurich ct 1953 (10)

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 Bf5 4.d3 e6 5.Nbd2 h6 6.0-0 Bc5**

Normally 6.... Be7 is played here.

**7.Qe1 0-0 8.e4**



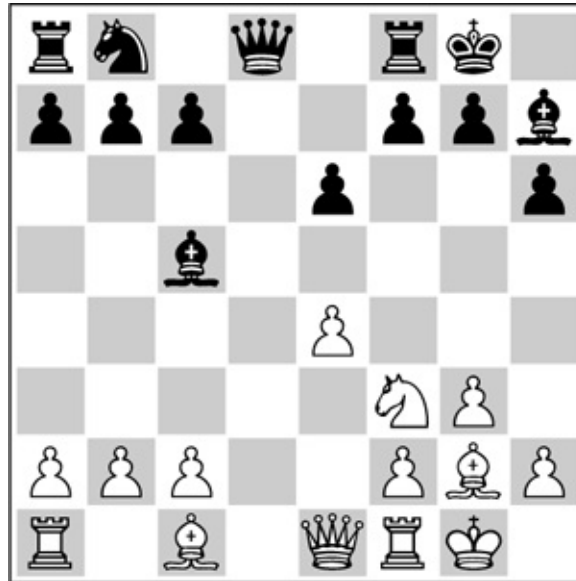
**8...dxe4?**

Black voluntarily releases the tension, which is contrary to the logic of this position. With his opening set-up Black has established a strong point on d5, which he now gives up for nothing.

**9.Nxe4 Nxe4**

Black has to exchange on e4, as 9...Be7 10.Nxf6+ Bxf6 11.Nh4! would be no picnic for him. But if he had known what was awaiting him in this game, he would have captured with the bishop on e4 without further ado, even though this would have cost him the bishop pair.

**10.dxe4 Bh7**



Just like in the previous fragment, this bishop is locked up and condemned to watch behind bars the spectacle taking place elsewhere. Petrosian understands like no other that in the following, he has to maintain the pawn on e4 at all cost!

**11.b4!**

White wins time and space on the queenside. It is clear that the initiative has gone over to Petrosian.

**11...Be7 12.Bb2 Na6**

Here the knight is on the wrong track. There was more to be said for 12...Nd7, followed by ...c6 and ...Qc7.

**13.a3 c6 14.Rd1 Qc8 15.c4 Nc7 16.Qc3**

The opening phase is over, and White has emerged from it with a clear advantage. He has more space and can choose between several interesting plans.

**16...Bf6**



### 17.Ne5!

Would you have played that one? Or was the temptation to play 17.e5 too great for you? As we said before, this would indeed have been a strategic mistake, bringing the confined bishop on h7 back to life.

### 17...Rd8



### 18.Bf3?!

Now that Black has released hold of the f7-point, Petrosian tries to attack it in order to provoke weaknesses. However, Bronstein indicates a plan that would have been more to the point: 18.Qc1!, intending c4-c5 followed by Ne5-c4, so as to get more grip on the d-file.

Also interesting is 18.Qf3!?, intending to start combinations. Now that the black

queen is somewhat tucked away on c8, the threat of 19.Nxf7 suddenly becomes acute. By the way, this possibility would have represented a complete change from the original concept.

**18...Ne8!**

Black is defending adequately. To the planned 19.Bh5, he could now answer 19...Qc7!, after which the strike on f7 is not possible.

**19.Rxd8 Qxd8 20.Rd1 Qc7 21.c5**

Petrosian reverts to the correct plan after all

**21 ...a5?!**

Better was the immediate 21...Rd8, since the text move gives White the opportunity to win a tempo for the regrouping of his pieces.

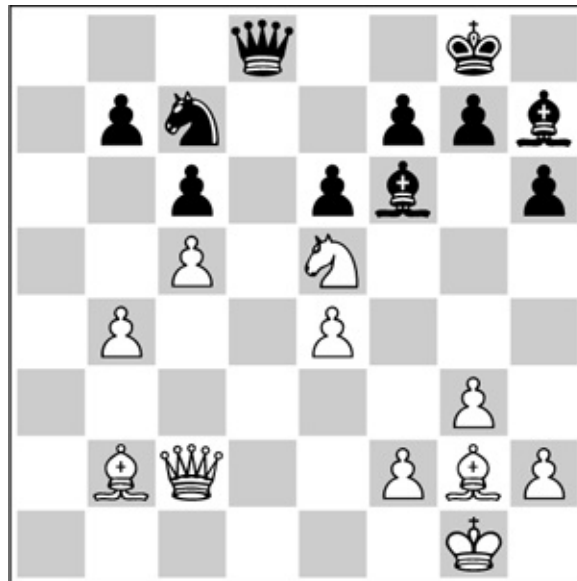
**22.Bg2axb4 23.axb4 Rd8**

Black now realizes that the a-file is of no use to him. After 23...Ra2 24.f4, followed by 25.Qb3, the rook will have to return home empty-handed.

**24.Rxd8 Qxd8 25.Qc2**

In this way, White keeps all the squares on the d-file under control.

**25...Nc7**

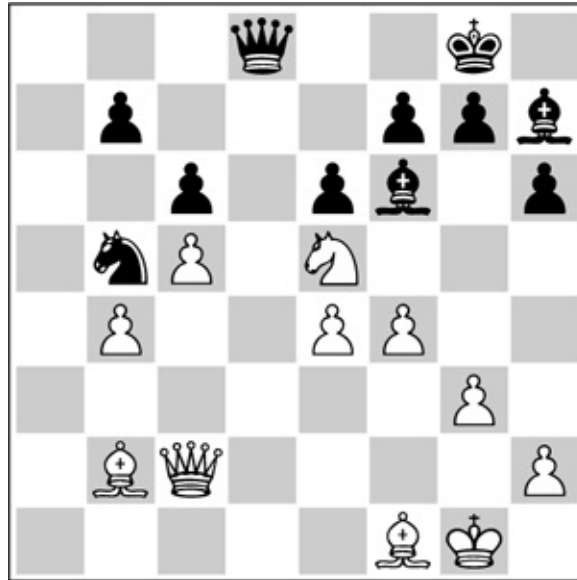


**26.Bf1?!**

Petrosian is not very fortunate every time he touches his light-squared bishop in this game. He would have done better to cast aside his pursuit of a subtle handling of the entire game here. The correct approach was 26.f3!, in order to give the pawn on e4 permanent protection and to definitively box in Black's bishop on h7. After 26...Nb5 White's best reply is 27.Nc4, maintaining the advantage.

**26...Nb5**

Threatening to interrupt the communication between the white lines with 27...Nd4.  
**27.f4**



### **27...Kf8!?**

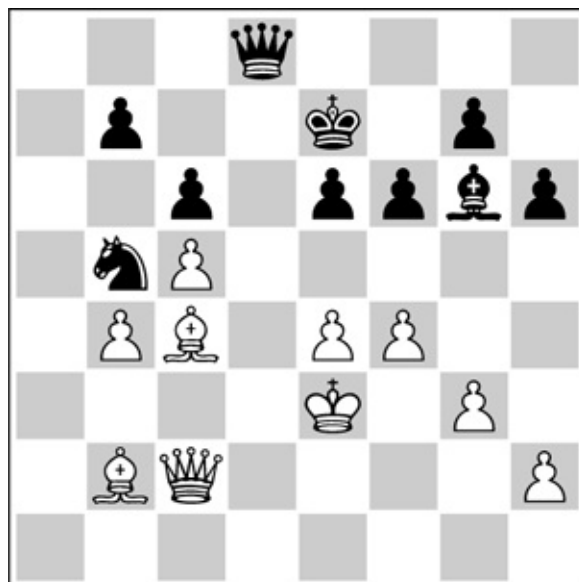
Here Black could have complicated matters with 27...Nd4, for which Petrosian had prepared the following: 28.Qd1! Nb5 29.Qxd8+ Bxd8 30.Bd3, and White has excellent chances in this endgame; A better alternative for Black is 27...Qa8!, after which he threatens to make an annoying entrance on the a-file, while White has to keep protecting the pawn on e4.

### **28.Kf2 Bxe5?**

Although the knight has been a thorn in Black's flesh for several moves, the cure is worse than the disease. From here on, the white bishop pair will reign supreme.

**29.Bxe5 f6 30.Bb2 Ke7 31.Bc4 Bg6 32.Ke3**





**32...Bf7**

With some effort, Euwe has managed to give his bishop a function. However, the concessions he has been forced to make for this have put him in a passive position.

**33.g4!**

Now that Black has given up his dark-squared bishop, White prepares to attack the long diagonal. If the dark squares are opened up, Black will have no answer to the invasion at hand.

**33...Qc7 34.e5!**

Now we see why White had to start with g2-g4: ...f6-f5 has been ruled out.

**34...Qd8 35.exf6+gxf6**

The dark-squared bishop is gaining in strength.

**36.h4**

White could have made a direct attempt to strike with 36.Bxb5 cxb5 37.Qc3, after which Black has to give a pawn with 37...Ke8 38.Qxf6 Qxf6 39.Bxf6. Petrosian rightly fears that this opposite-coloured bishop endgame cannot be won.

**36...Nc7**

In *Petrosian's Best Games 1946-63*, PH. Clarke indicates that Black could have put up more resistance with 36...Qg8.

**37.Qc3**



**37...Nd5+?!**

Euwe is desperately looking for counter-chances. After 37...Ne8 38.Bb3, he could only have watched how White would convert his advantage into a win.

**38.Bxd5**

White now deliberately opts for an attack with opposite-coloured bishops. In spite of the reduced material, his winning chances have increased.

**38...Qxd5 39.Qxf6+ Ke8 40.Qh8+ Kd7 41.Qg7**



Here the game was adjourned, and during the break, Petrosian searched for the right set-up for his pieces. It is clear that the only thing he has to watch out for is that Black may force perpetual check in one way or another.

**41...Ke8 42.Bf6 Qb3+ 43.Bc3 Qd1 44.Qh8+ Kd7 45.Qb8 Qc1+**

The crucial question is how White should react to 45...Qg1+. With 46.Kd2 Qf2+ 47.Kd1 Qf1+ 48.Kc2 Qe2+ 49.Bd2, he reaches the position that also arises in the game.

**46.Bd2 Qg1+ 47.Kd3 Qf1+**

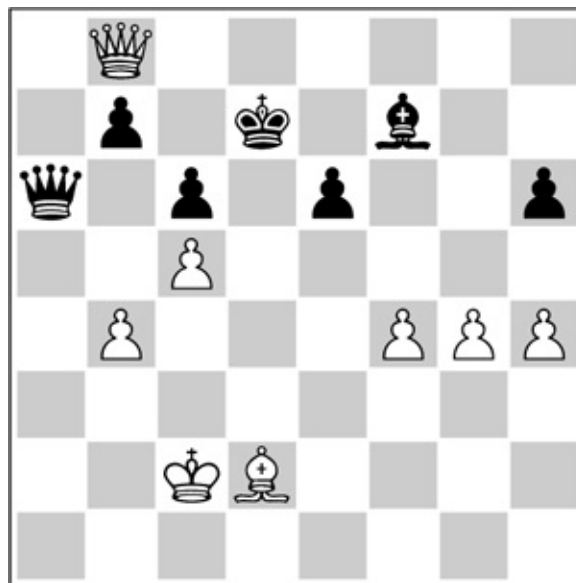
Black cannot activate his bishop with 47...Bg6+, since after 48.f5 exf5 49.Qd6+, he would lose it.

**48.Kc2**

The queen is forced to give assistance to the defence from a passive square.

**48...Qa6**

After 48...Qc4+ 49.Kb2 Qd4+ 50.Bc3 Qf2+ 51.Ka3, the annoying checks are over.

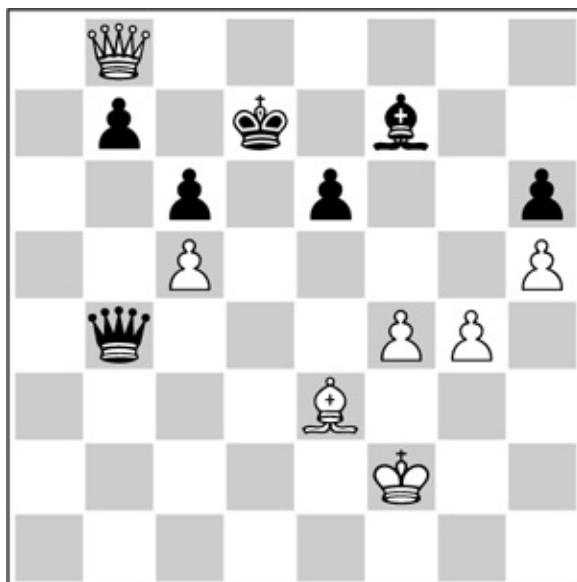


**49.h5!**

White continues to make a joke of his endeavour to leave the bishop on f7 with as little space as possible. At the same time he fixes the black h-pawn on a dark square, so that later on he can comfortably exchange queens, since in the opposite-coloured bishops endgame the pawn on h6 will be an easy prey for his bishop. The fact that Black can now start a new series of checks cannot hurt White in the least. He has accurately puzzled out that his bishop provides a good shield against the shower of checks.

**49...Qa2+ 50.Kd3 Qb1+ 51.Ke2 Qe4+ 52.Kf2 Qd4+ 53.Be3 Qxb4**

After 53...Qb2+ 54.Kg3, an 'echo' of the variation given at the 48th move ensues, where the white king escaped via a3.



### 54.Qf8!

So far Petrosian had analysed everything during the intermission. He had seen that the black queen has to return to f6, where it is condemned to play a passive role, giving White free hand to finish off without risk.

### 54...Qb2+ 55.Kg3 Qf6 56.Qd6+

Petrosian's play was always characterized by the motto 'safety first'. Also possible was a liquidation to a queen ending with 56.Bd4 Qxd4 57.Qxf7+ Kd8 58.Qg8+ Ke7 59.Qh7+ Ke8 60.Qxh6, which should be winning since White's h-pawn has advanced quite far already.

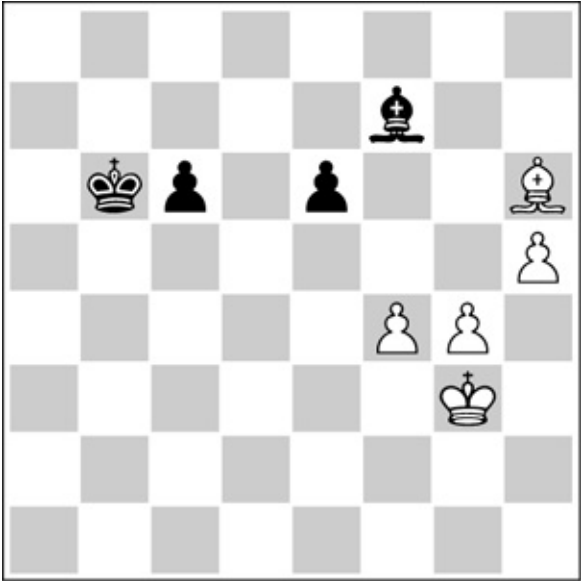
### 56...Kc8 57.Bd4

The key to White's winning plan. Black is forced to exchange queens, after which White's bishop is superior to its black colleague.

### 57...Qd8 58.Qxd8+

Finally he is allowed to liquidate to the ending he had in mind.

### 58...Kxd8 59.Bg7 Kc7 60.Bxh6 b6 61.cxb6+Kxb6

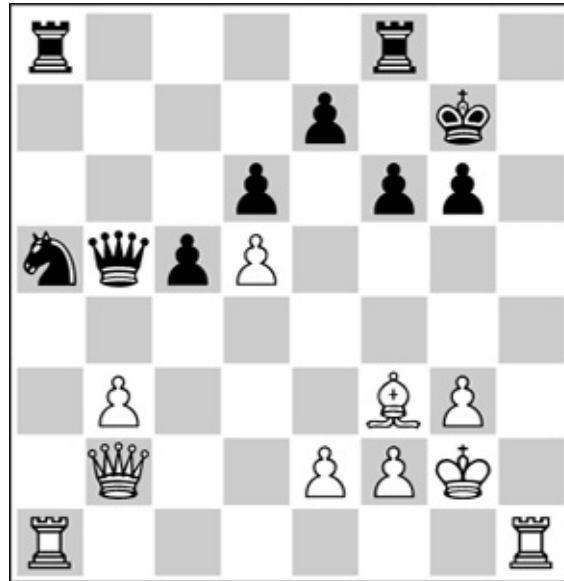


## 62.Kh4

And here Euwe had seen enough. The white pawn mass on the kingside cannot be stopped any longer.

## Exercises

17.1



How does White take advantage of the fact that the black knight is out of play?

[Solution](#)

17.2



In this position, determine on which side of the board White should play, and find a plan that corresponds with this.

[Solution](#)

17.3



It is clear that Black is wrestling with a lag in development, as a consequence of which a few of his pieces (Ra8 and, especially, Bc8) are still doing nothing. Which strategy should White pursue to take advantage of this lack in activity of his opponent?

**Solution**



17.4



At first sight, Black seems to be fully in the game. However, White has a forced liquidation at his disposal, which yields him a virtually decisive endgame advantage. If you see which of the opponent's pieces should be restricted, you will have little trouble finding the variation in its entirety.

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 18

### Quiz: open file

#### 18.1 Activity above all?

Steinitz's Table deals with purely strategic features, but every player knows that in most games tactics play an important part. Also the fact that in one position there are different factors influencing each other, does not make it easier to make a correct assessment.

Still, it is good to realize how the synthesis between strategy and tactics is established. Therefore, we must always consider the activity of the pieces on both sides. A player may have a fantastic pawn formation, control a beautiful open file and possess a strong square, but if he goes down to a direct mating attack on the other side of the board, all his strategic advantages come to naught. In every position it is important to look at the activity of the pieces, and how it can be increased – or how your opponent's activity can be decreased! A piece that is not active should be mobilized in one way or another. Only if a piece participates optimally in the battle, will you be able to say that this piece is of use to you.

This clear-headed impression of things is made by the Romanian grandmaster Mihai Suba in his book *Dynamic Chess Strategy*, in which he argued that on each move a piece should be developed, and preferably to squares that are available on the basis of the pawn formation. With this thought at the back of your mind, you can try to guess the moves in the following game, where the open file is the main theme. In this game, we must keep in mind in particular how we can use the available tactics to obtain strategic advantages. The opposite also applies: if we obtain a strategically winning position, we must finish off with tactics.

#### 18.2 Quiz

In this chapter we focus on an exercise with the theme 'activity'. In the following game, you can try to make difficult strategic decisions yourself with the help of the game of question and answer that we also played in Chapter 13. As in that chapter, you can test yourself by covering the text with a piece of paper.

□ **Biyiasas, Peter**

■ **Hug, Werner**

Petropolis izt 1973 (16)

**1.Nf3 c5 2.e4**

By transposition, the Sicilian has appeared on the board.

**2...e6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.Bb5 Nge7 5.0-0 a6 6.Bxc6 Nxc6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Be7**

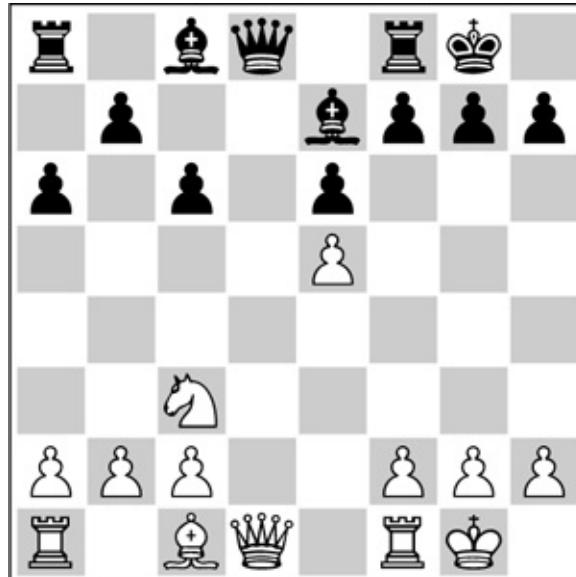
Instead of the text, 8...Qc7 is the most popular move.

**9.Nxc6 dxc6**

9...bxc6 10.e5 gives White an attractive edge, since the square d6 has become weak. 10...d5 11.exd6 is not very attractive for Black either.

**10.e5 0-0**

Exchanging queens would have been a wiser choice.



**Question 1:** How does White continue?

**11.Qe2**

Answer to Question 1:

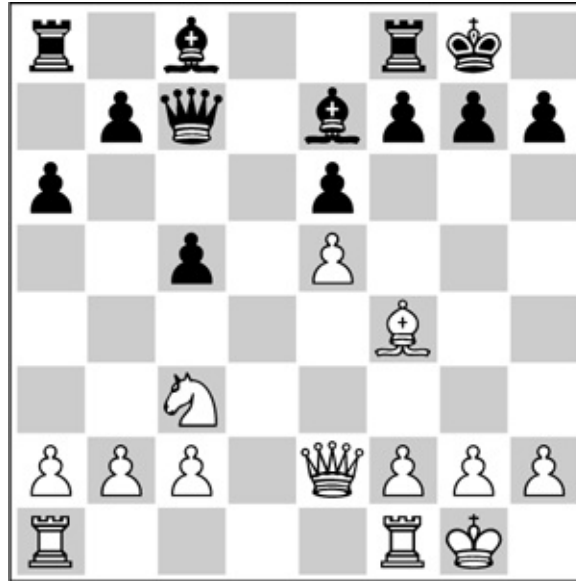
For White it is important to keep the queens on the board. He opts for placing the queen on e2, so that his pawn on e5 remains protected in any case.

An attractive, rather more aggressive idea was to continue with 11.Qg4. White would also be better in that case.

**11...Qc7 12.Bf4**

This is the best position for the bishop. The pawn on e5 is 'overprotected', so that White has a free hand to bring the rest of his pieces into play.

12...c5



**Question 2:** What is the best way for White to continue?

**13.Ne4**

Answer to Question 2:

With this move White activates his knight, which he hopes to employ on the kingside later on. He has the extra possibility of exploiting the square d6.

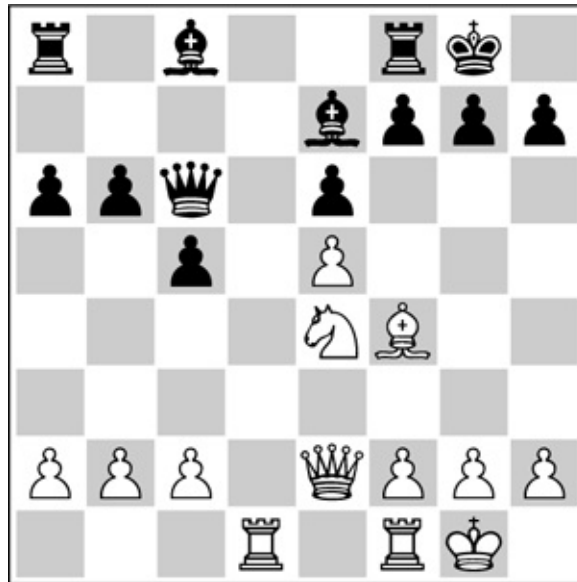
**13...Qc6?!**

A dubious move: for the moment Black does not do anything for his development, and he will pay dearly for that later on.

**14.Rad1**

Of course, White brings his queen's rook into play as quickly as possible.

**14...b6**



**Question 3:** What should be the aim of White's strategy, and with which move can he realize this?

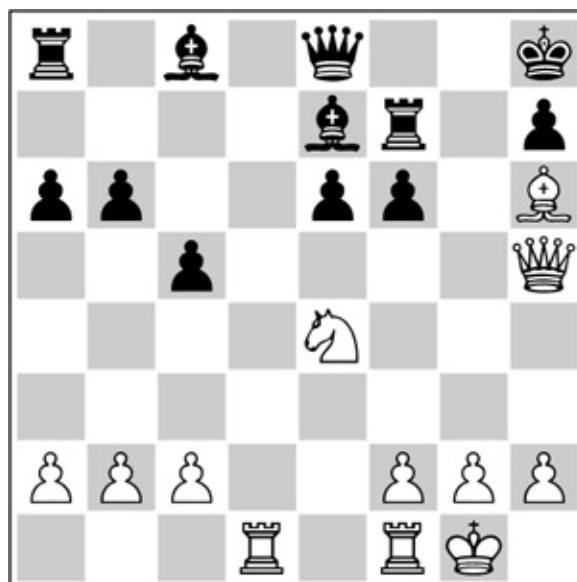
**15.Bg5!**

Answer to Question 3:

White would be happy to swap the dark-squared bishops, as that way he will create a 'springboard' for his other pieces on the open d-file.

**15...Bxg5**

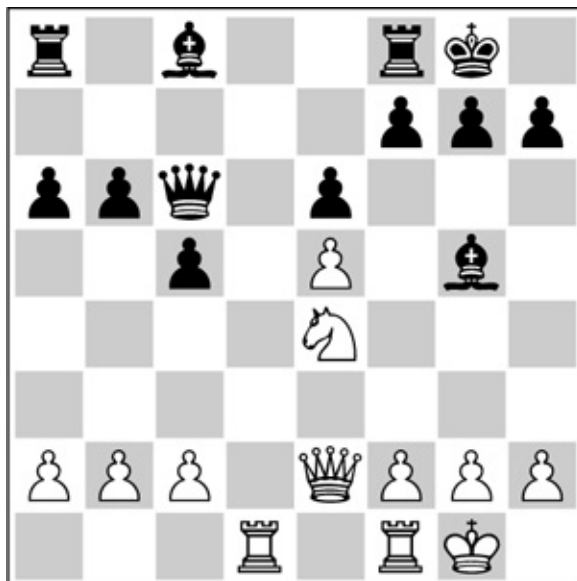
A crucial point is what follows after 15...f6, as in this variation Black refuses to allow the exchange of his dark-squared bishop. The following liquidation is more or less forced: 16.exf6 gxf6 17.Bh6 Rf7 18.Qg4+ Kh8 19.Qh5 Qe8.



**Question 4:** After his last moves Black appears to have everything under control, and he is ready to put his bishop on the long diagonal with ...Bc8-b7. What rude awakening awaits him here?

Answer to Question 4:

If you have discovered the following tactical blow, you have good tactical vision! The following variations prove that this indeed wins for White: 20.Rd8!! Bxd8 (it is clear that White wins easily after 20...Qxd8 21.Qxf7 Qg8 22.Qxe7) 21.Nd6 Qd7 (also after 21...Qe7 22.Nxf7+ Kg8 23.Rd1! Bc7 24.Qg4+ Kxf7 25.Qg7+ Ke8 26.Qg8+, Black is artistically mated) 22.Nxf7+ Kg8, and now 23.Qg4+! Kxf7 24.Qg7+ Ke8 25.Qf8# produces a beautiful mating picture.



**Question 5:** How would you continue?

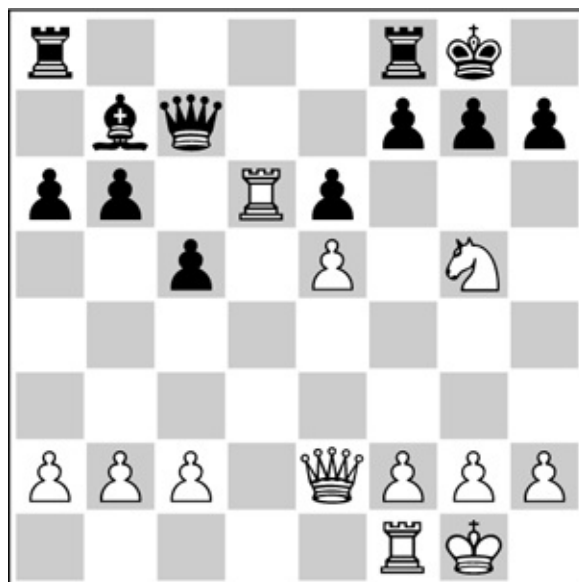
**16.Rd6!**

Answer to Question 5:

Right! In chess you are not obliged to recapture immediately. It is always good to have an open eye for alternatives, and with this intermediate move White accomplishes a great deal. After 16.Nxg5 Bb7 his advantage would largely evaporate, as Black will always get a rook on the d-file in time.

**16...Qc7 17.Nxg5 Bb7**

The knight could not be kicked away with 17...h6 in view of the double attack 18.Qe4.



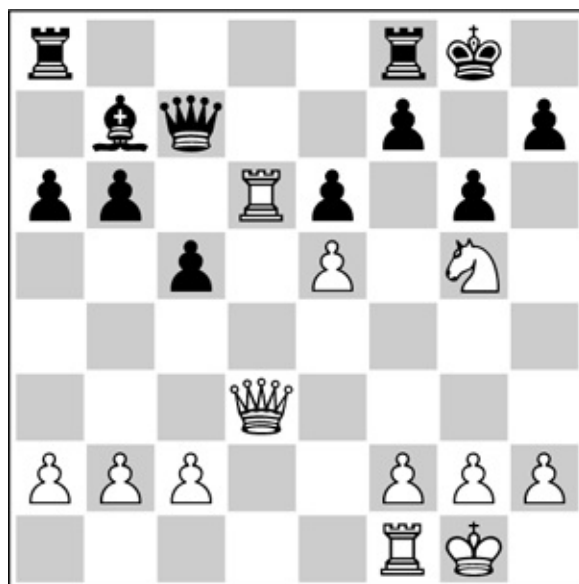
**Question 6:** With which (multifunctional) move can White increase his advantage?

**18.Qd3!**

Answer to Question 6:

With this move White not only achieves domination of the d-file by with gain of tempo, he also forces an ugly weakening.

**18...g6**



**Question 7:** What is White's best choice in this position?

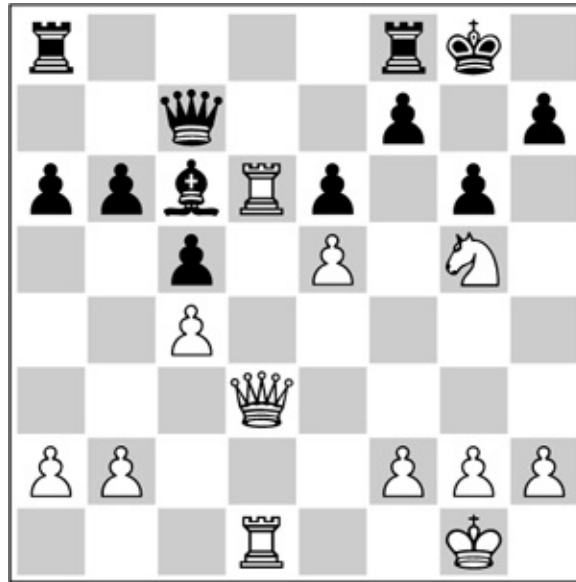
### 19.Rd1

Answer to Question 7: Possession of the d-file is of crucial importance. Not only because this is the only open file on the board, but especially because the rook on d6 will be able to play an important role in this position.

### 19...Bd5

Things go from bad to worse with Black. Somewhat more tenacious was 19...Qe7, after which 20.f4 is the best continuation.

### 20.c4 Bc6



**Question 8:** What is White's most promising continuation?

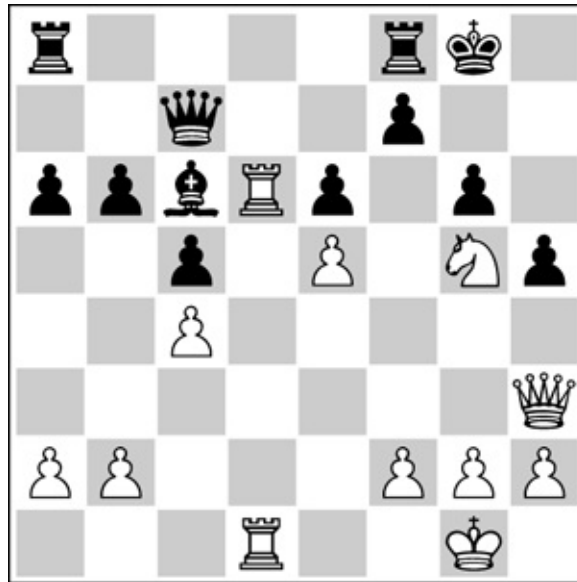
### 21.Qh3!

Answer to Question 8:

With this move, White forces a second, even uglier weakening, and also the queen stands very well on this square for yet another reason.

### 21 ...h5





**Question 9:** With which combination can White decide the game in his favour?

**22.Nxe6!**

**1-0**

Answer to Question 9:

With this pseudo- sacrifice White blows the black pawn structure to smithereens. He will win the piece back with interest. After 22...fxe6 23.Qxe6+ Qf7 (23... Kh8 24.Rxc6) 24.Qxg6+ Qxg6 25.Rxg6+ Kh7 26.Rxc6, White has won (more than) enough material to convince Black to call it a day.

## Chapter 19

# Harmony and coordination

### 19.1 Introduction

In the decadent West, we are experiencing a penchant for Eastern culture at the moment. Developments are going so quickly that there is insufficient time for reflection. For this reason, more and more people are following meditative courses, like yoga.

There is also a tendency to go in for combat sports. As for myself, I have never been able to put my mind to such things, but there is one Eastern combat sport that has a philosophy behind it that appeals to me: Tai Chi. I am told that with Tai Chi, the student is taught typical defensive techniques based on evasion. Tai Chi is all about your own inner balance. The Tai Chi master does not have to be strong, but keeps his balance in all cases and forces the opponent to use all his power against himself. As he is in full harmony with himself, moving along with the opponent's unexpected swings, the latter will hit nothing but air.

The following remark of a Tai Chi master is significant: 'I use only 10 pounds in order to receive 1,000 pounds.' By evading the blows in the nick of time, he causes the 1,000 pounds to miss their target, and the opponent will get out of balance rather than he.

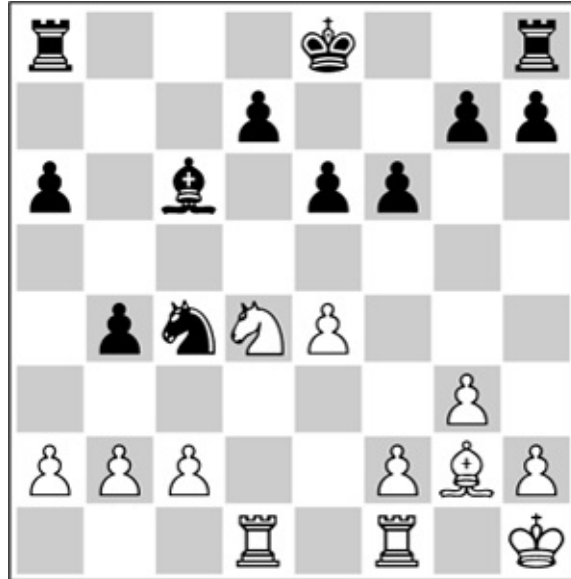
This phenomenon definitely applies also to chess. If you take care that everything is in harmony within your own ranks, nothing much can happen to you. Of course a player must watch carefully which blows the opponent wants to strike 'on the body'. By moving along with him and causing him to fight against himself, you need only '10 pounds to receive 1,000 pounds'.

The following game is by the Dutch master Johan van Mil from Eindhoven, who sadly passed away in 2008 at the age of 49. With him I have travelled through Europe for several years, in search of adventure and eternal fame. From a young age, Van Mil suffered from kidney problems. When he finally underwent a transplant, he was afraid of one day unexpectedly receiving a blow on this new kidney. This fear caused him to take up Tai Chi, with which, as he said, he also achieved a better balance within himself. In the following magnificently played game, he applies the art of evasion to perfection:

□ Vogt,Lothar

■ Van Mil,Johan

Kecskemet 1985 (10)



### 20...Bb7!

The first signs of the Tai Chi strategy. With 20...Nxb2?! Black would agree to engage in the fist fight that White has in mind. After 21.Rb1 Nc4 22.Nxc6 dxc6 23.Rxb4 Black hasn't exactly made much progress.

### 21.Rc1 Rc8

21...Nxb2 22.Rb1 Na4 23.Rxb4 Nc5 gives White reasonable counterplay – he will even have a slight edge.

### 22.b3

Now, after 22.c3, Black could capture on b2: 22...Nxb2! 23.cxb4 Ke7, and the nasty threat is 24...Nd3.

### 22...Nd6 23.f3 Ke7 24.Ne2

White has to try to solve his pawn weakness on c2 as soon as possible, otherwise Black will double his rooks on the c-file.

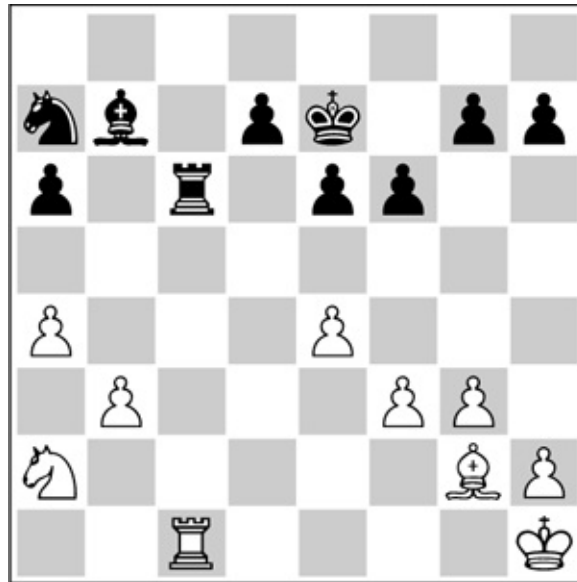
### 24...Nb5 25.c4 bxc3 26.a4 Na7!

The knight will be eyeing the c6-square after a while, from where it could make use of the weakness that has just been created on b4.

### 27.Nxc3 Rc6 28.Na2 Rhc8

Threatening 29...Rc2.

### 29.Rxc6 Rxc6 30.Rc1



**30...Rd6!**

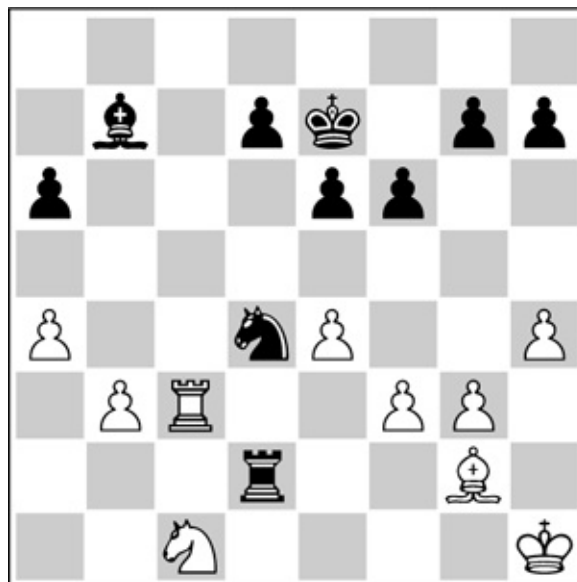
Black avoids the rook swap, since in the following his rook will have more influence than his opponent's.

**31.h4?!**

Weakening his pawn formation, which will cost him dearly later on.

Admittedly, 31.Rc7 was not possible in view of 31...Rd1+ 32.Kg2 Rxf1+ 33.Kg2 Ra1, but it would have been better to continue 31.Kg1.

**31 ...Nc6 32.Rc3 Rd2 33.Nc1 Nd4**



The knight opts for the central square d4, and thus Black is ready for ...f6-f5.

**34.b4?!**

This more or less costs a pawn, but White hopes that he will be able to hold a

draw in the position with four pawns versus five on the same wing.

**34...Bc6 35.b5**

In his distress White gives a pawn, as he is afraid that Black will later emerge with an outside passed pawn.

The continuation 35.a5 Bb5 looks bad for White since the threat of 36...Rb2, winning a pawn, cannot be averted, and the weak a-pawn will soon be lost as well.

**35...axb5 36.axb5 Nxb5 37.Rd3 Rb2**

Once again Black avoids the rook swap. His pieces are arranged harmoniously, whereas any cohesion between the white pieces is lacking.

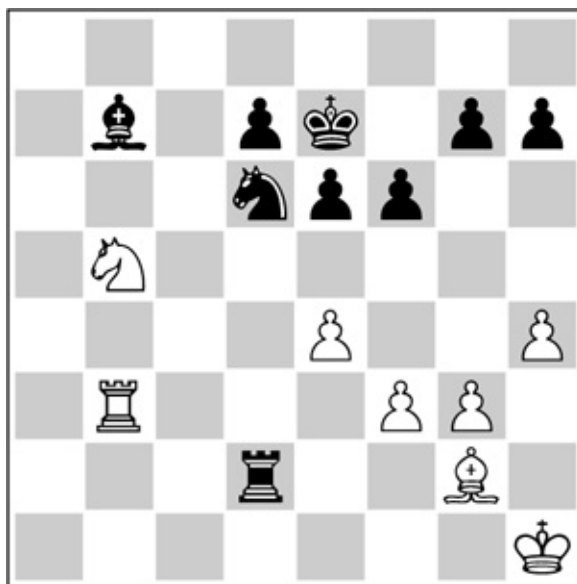
**38.Nb3**

White intends at least to land a blow below the belt with 39.Nd4.

**38...Nd6**

Once again Black avoids all confrontations.

**39.Nd4 Bb7 40.Rb3 Rd2 41.Nb5**



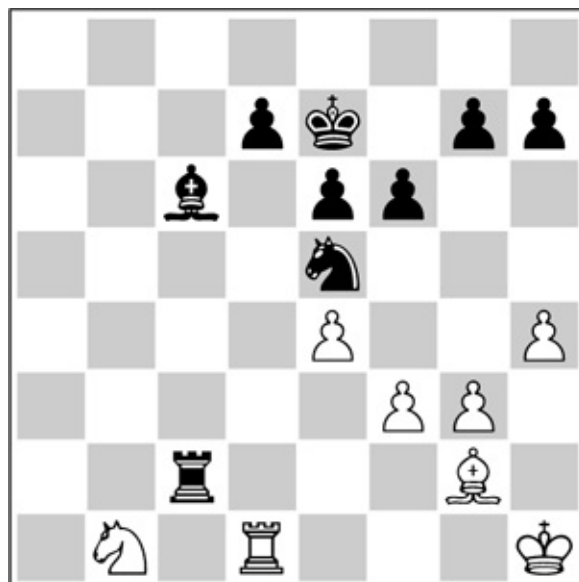
**41...Nf7!**

Meticulously, every piece exchange is avoided. Thus Black shows that he has fully mastered the ‘art of evasion’. In his comments to this game Van Mil wrote: ‘The white knight would have been best placed beside the board now; there is no function for it to be found anywhere.’

**42.Nc3 Bc6 43.Rb1**

It is amusing to see White’s pieces continuously hitting thin air. The black position offers not a single target.

**43...Ne5 44.Rd1 Rc2 45.Nb1**



**45...f5!**

Now that he has sent the opponent's 1,000 pounds in the wrong direction, Black takes action. With the text move he initiates the first 'physical' contact for ages. And he hits home immediately.

The true Tai Chi master might have opted for 45...Nc4 here, creating the threat of 46...Rxd2 in the process.

**46.Kg1**

46.exf5? was out of the question, on account of 46...Rxd2 47.Kxd2 Bxf3+, and Black wins a piece.

**46...fxe4 47.fxe4 Ng4**

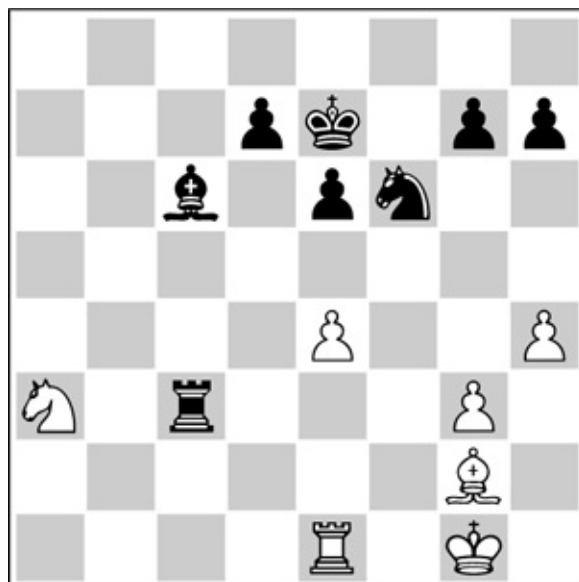
Threatening 48...Rxd2+ followed by 49...Ne3+. Rarely will grandmaster Vogt have felt so powerless.

More in style was 47...Nc4, since here the knight is invulnerable, and, besides threatening 48...Rxd2, it also deprives the white knight of its most important squares.

**48.Re1?!**

This amounts to a quiet demise. White could still try 48.Bf3 Ne3 49.Rd3 Rc1+ 50.Kf2 Nc4 51.Nd2, when at least his pieces would be brought back to life.

**48...Nf6 49.Na3 Rc3**



After a knight move a second pawn will be lost, and soon more will follow. The white player didn't feel like waiting for this and resigned.

Now we are talking about harmony, it is important to recognize when the harmony within your own lines has been disturbed. This may be caused by a number of reasons:

**A) The pieces are in each other's way**

**A1) Due to lack of space, some of the pieces are hindered in their manoeuvres.**

We have seen clear examples of this elsewhere in this book.

**A2) Two pieces want to make use of the same square.**

This principle is explained by the Romanian grandmaster Mihai Suba in his book *Dynamic Chess Strategy*:

**Clearing Policy**

The position must be cleared of strategic and tactical impurities in order to obtain a clear and realizable strategic advantage. It should go without saying that in all themes, what is good for one side is bad for the other. As a corollary of the 'clearing policy' we can infer the need to refrain from 'clearing' when the opponent has an obvious strategic advantage, in order to avoid leaving it as the main factor in the position. In a Soviet magazine I once saw an interesting article entitled 'Lishnaya Figura' (= roughly 'The Superfluous Piece'). It stressed the inactivity of the superfluous piece, which

may cause trouble for its owner. Here is an example:



White to move should play

**1.Nxc7 Qxc7 2.Nd5**

with a clear advantage of a dominant knight against a bad bishop and automatic play on the queenside by b4, bxc5 etc. Black to move should avoid the exchange and make the knight on c3 superfluous, e.g. **1...Ne6**, keeping the game alive with good counterchances on the kingside.

**A3) Due to specific circumstances, development has been disturbed considerably, and it is hard to complete it**  
(see the game Botvinnik-Yudovich).

**B) The cooperation between the pieces has been disturbed**

**B1) Due to the activity of the enemy pieces, one's own pieces are 'wrong-footed' (see the game O'Kelly de Galway-Castaldi).**

**B2) A certain piece can do nothing due to the pawn structure (see the game Nimzowitsch-Rubinstein).**

**B3) Pieces are hitting thin air, lacking targets (see the game Vogt-Van Mil given earlier).**

**B4) A certain piece is inconveniently in the way, disturbing the harmony between the queen- and the kingside (see the game M.Gurevich-Timman).**

It's high time to discuss the aforementioned games.



SL 3.6 (D96)

□ Botvinnik, Mikhail

■ Yudovich, Mikhail

Leningrad ch-URS 1933

1.c4 Nf6 2.d4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Qb3 c6 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.Bd2 0-0 8.e4



**8...Nb6?!**

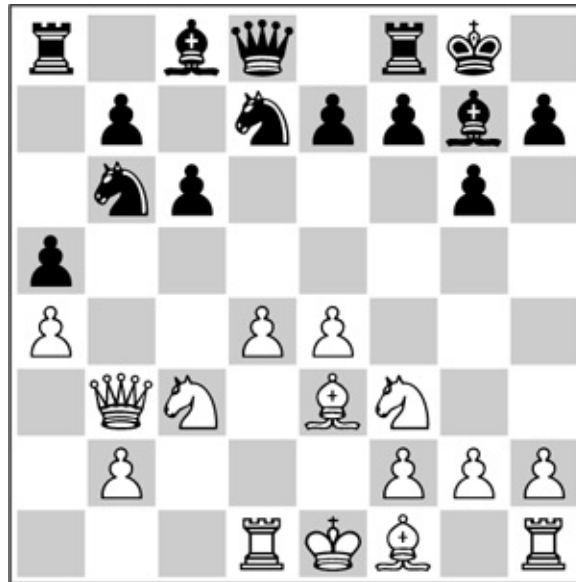
This is the root of all the evil that will befall Black later in the game. He should have preferred the exchange on c3.

**9.Rd1 N8d7 10.a4! a5**

Thus Black weakens the b6-square, adding to his strategic problems.

He had a chance to become active, but then he would have had to sacrifice an exchange after 10...e5 11.dxe5 Nxe5 12.Nxe5 Bxe5 13.Bh6 Qe7 14.Bxf8 Qxf8 – which, incidentally, would certainly have given him compensation.

**11.Be3**



In this position Black faces a problem that we can compare to the famous cutting of the Gordian knot. In order to develop his queenside, Black has to involve his c8 bishop in the game. To achieve this, he will have to reposition his d7 knight, but there are enormous disadvantages attached to this. For instance, 11...Nf6 is strongly met by 12.d5!, and after 12...Nbd7 13.dxc6 bxc6 Black is left with a terrible weakness on c6, for which he hardly has any dynamic compensation. So the knight cannot leave d7, as that will leave its colleague on b6 unprotected. Let's put it like this: if Black wants to remove his d7 knight, he will first have to do something about the b6 knight. But, as is easy to establish, the b6 knight has no squares available to it. A set-up with ...Rb8 followed by ...Na8 does not provide a solution either, since then White would have Be3-f4 at his disposal, apart from the fact that on a8 the knight is not exactly beautifully placed either. So everything is connected. The problem of the b6 knight cannot be solved until White no longer has the possibility of d4-d5. Black cannot move a piece before he has done something about this.

Yudovich conceived the plan to relieve the pressure on his position by driving away the white queen from b3 with the manoeuvre ...Qd8-c7-d6-b4.

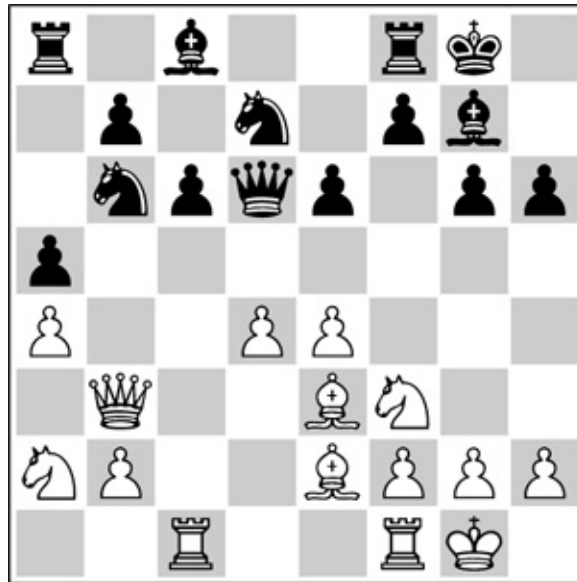
**11...Qc7 12.Be2 Qd6 13.Na2!**

Botvinnik keeps his grip on the opponent, and doesn't allow him to untie himself with 13...Qb4+. The misplacing of the white knight is only a temporary problem.

**13...e6**

As long as White has a set-up with Qb3 and Be3, there is hardly anything sensible to be found for Black.

**14.0-0 h6 15.Rd!**



White prepares the development of the king's rook to d1.

**15...f5**

The black player wants to drive away the bishop on e3 by force, and he also hopes to get hold of the d5-square, after which he could nurse some hope of cutting the Gordian knot.

**16.Nc3**

A good moment to bring the misplaced knight back into the game.

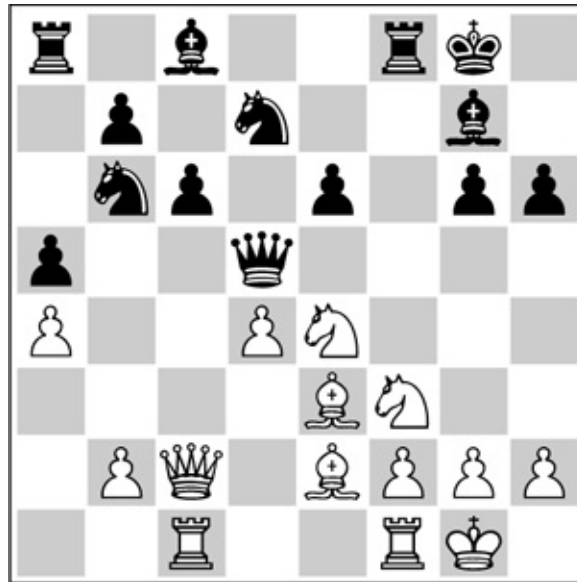
**16...Kh7**

The black king leaves the vulnerable a2-g8 diagonal, allowing Black the possibility of working with ...Qd6-b4.

Incidentally, 16...fxe4 would offer no relief either after 17.Nxe4, and now:

A) 17...Qe7. The best defence, after which White does best to continue with 18.Ne5!, still dictating the game.

B) Provocative, but less good is 17...Qd5 18.Qc2!, and now:



Analysis diagram

B1) 18...Rf7, intending 19...Nf8, fails to 19.Nc3, winning the g6 pawn.

B2) 18...Nf6 19.Nc3, and again the pawn g6 disappears from the board, with grave consequences.

B3) The violent attempt 18...Nxa4 does not offer any relief after 19.Bc4 Qf5 20.Nh4 Qh5 21.Bxe6+, and White has a lethal initiative.

### **17.Rfd1fxe4?**

After this, Black will no longer be able to involve his pieces in the game. In the meantime, he has opened the centre for his opponent, and as a result his king falls prey to the combined powers of the white pieces. Black should now have consistently continued with 17...f4!. Then, after 18.Bd2, 18... Qb4 looks like a nice try for Black.

A) Not advisable for White is 19.Qxb4?! axb4 20.NM Rxa4 21.b3 Ra2 22.Kf1, followed by 23.Bxb4, and White has the better endgame, but this is not yet disastrous for Black;

B) 19.Qxe6?! Ne5! 20.Qa2 Nxf3+ 21.Bxf3 Bxd4 is still playable for Black;

C) The correct reaction is 19.Qc2!, threatening a discovered attack by the knight. If Black prevents this with, for example, 19...Qe7, White continues with the strong 20.e5, after which the weakness of the g6 pawn will be Black's downfall.

### **18.Nxe4 Qb4 19.Qc2!**

Botvinnik directs his attention to the weak point g6 and does not indulge in the e6 pawn with 19.Qxe6?!, since this would only be of service to his opponent after 19...Nf6. At the cost of a pawn, Black would have managed to bring his

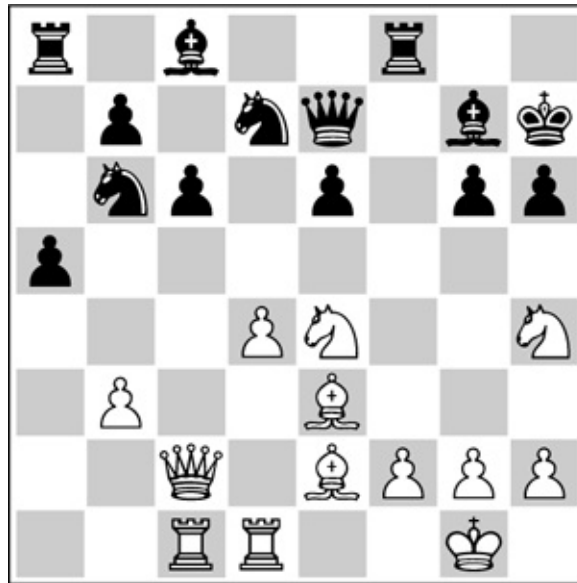
pieces into play.

**19...Qxa4 20.b3 Qa3 21.Nh4!**

A new attack on the g6 pawn, which now comes under heavy fire.

**21...Qe7**

This does not parry the threat, but there was nothing sensible to be found anymore. After, for instance, 21...a4 22.bxa4 Qxa4 23.Qd3 Nd5, White again deals the decisive blow with 24.Nxg6!, as will happen in the game.



**22.Nxg6!**

The inevitable combination that had been hanging in the air for a while.

**22...Kxg6 23.Bh5+!**

A magnet attack, which delivers the final blow. Mate is forced after 23...Kxh5 24.Ng3+ Kg4 25.Qe4+ Rf4 26.Qxf4. Therefore, Black resigned.

When playing through games by good grandmasters it strikes me that they almost invariably set up their pieces optimally. This is not so easy, for how can you make your pieces cooperate? In many cases, what counts is to establish which pieces are not active, and how they can be given a brighter future. And, as a rule, this is closely connected with the pawn structure. The following example is a good illustration.

□ **Nimzowitsch, Aaron**

■ **Rubinstein, Akiba**

Dresden 1926 (5)



Most of the white pieces are active, or will become so soon. White has just opened the e-file to increase the activity of his pieces. Now White hopes to make use of the weakness of the square e6. How should he go about this?

**18.Nh1!!**

This move is based on a brilliant concept. Nimzowitsch has discovered that his knight is not well placed, and manoeuvres it to squares where a better future awaits it. Via h1-f2-h3-g5, the knight will be involved in a dangerous attack on the black king.

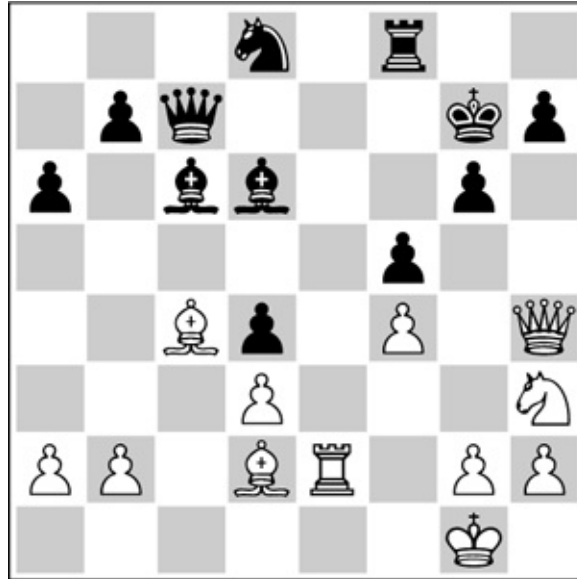
**18...Bd7 19.Nf2 Rae8 20.Rfe1 Rxe2 21.Rxe2 Nd8**

Not 21...Re8 22.Rxe8+ Bxe8 23.Qd5 Ne7 24.Qxd4, and White has won a valuable pawn.

**22.Nh3 Bc6**

Black cannot keep the white knight out with 22...h6, because 23.Ng5! would follow anyway. After 23...hxg5?? it is mate with 24.Qh5.

**23.Qh5g6 24.Qh4 Kg7**



### 25.Qf2!

White is combining several ideas. The attack on d4 is unpleasant for Black.

### 25...Bc5

25...Qb6 was no solution either, as White would have the tricky 26.Qe1!. If Black would then help himself to the b2 pawn, he would catch a cold: 26...Qxb2 27.Ba5 Qa3 28.Bb6 Bc5 29.Bxc5 Qxc5 30.Re7+, and the white attack is decisive.

### 26.b4

This was the intention of White's previous move. The bishop now has to change diagonals, which makes the square e7 vulnerable.

### 26...Bb6?

The pawn loss after 26...Be7 27.Qxd4+ Bf6 would still have been the lesser of two evils. With the text move, the black player could have tripped up badly.

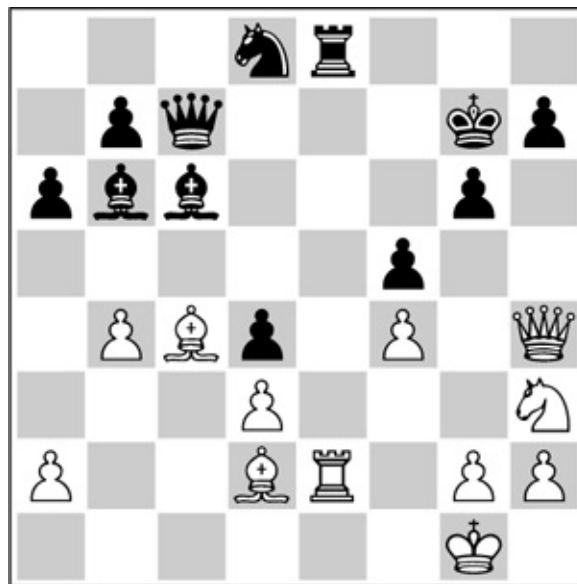


### 27.Qh4?

Remarkably enough, Nimzowitsch does not take profit from this sudden chance. With the subtle 27.Qe1!, he could have secured the point. The penetration of the rook on e7 is devastating, for example: 27...Qd6 28.Re7+ Kh8 29.Ng5.

### 27...Re8!

In this way, Black remains on his feet.



### 28.Re5!

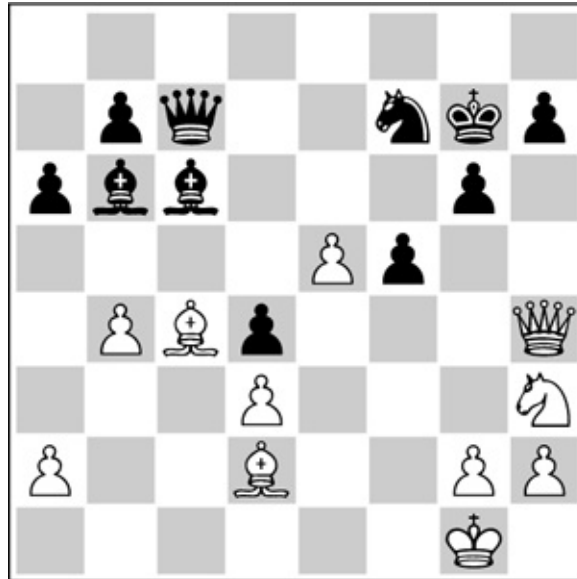
Black has defended craftily, but now he again faces great problems.

### 28...Nf7?!

An ugly inaccuracy, just when the black player seemed to have matters in hand again.



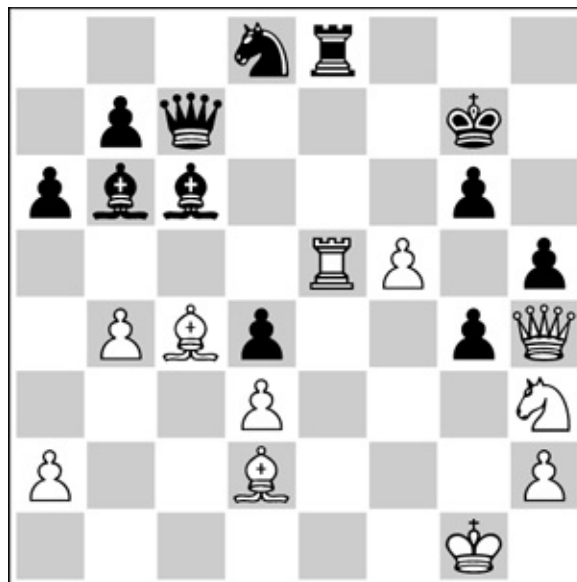
The rook cannot be exchanged due to mate: 28...Rxe5? 29.fxe5 Qxe5 (29...Nf7 is met by the marvellous



Analysis diagram

30.Bh6+!! Nxh6 31.Qf6#, and so White can maintain the pressure) 30.Qh6+ Kh8 31.Qf8#.

After 28...h6, White can take aim at the weakened king's position with 29.g4!?. Now, 29...fxg4? is immediately losing, in view of the pretty surprise attack 30.f5! h5 (or 30...g5 31.f6+! and the black position collapses like a house of cards)



31.Bh6+!! Kxh6 (or 31...Kh7 32.Qf6 and it's mate in four) 32.Qg5+ Kh7

33.Qxg6+ Kh8 34.Rxe8+ Bxe8 35.Qg8#.

But after 29...Qd6!, Black is not in trouble yet.

**29.Bxf7!**

White gives up his beautiful bishop in order finally to allow his knight to enter the fray.

**29...Qxf7 30.Ng5 Qg8 31.Rxe8 Bxe8 32.Qe1!**

It is amusing to see how from this diagonal (e1-h4), the queen has already caused quite a stir in the black camp. With the text move, the disorientation of the black pieces is exposed. Black cannot prevent the invasion via e5 or e7.

**32...Bc6 33.Qe7+ Kh8**



**34.b5**

In my source this move is awarded with an exclamation mark, but it looks as if Nimzowitsch overlooks a quicker win here with 34.Nf7+! (34.Ne6 leads to the same result) 34...Kg7 35.Nd8+ Kh6 36.Ne6. By sending the knight around the block and putting it on e6, White definitively ties up the mating net around the black king. Incidentally, the combinative idea that the white player is envisaging is also worth seeing.

**34...Qg7**

A pity. Black decides to give a piece in order not to be mated, but this won't save him the game. He would have done better to grant his opponent the honour to finish his beautiful masterpiece in style:

A) 34...Bxb5 costs a piece after 35.Qf6+ Qg7 36.Qxb6;

B) After 34...axb5 35.Ne6 h5 36.Qf6+ Kh7 37.Nf8+ Kh6 38.Qg5+ Kg7 39.Qxg6+ Kxf8, 40.Bb4+ was the playful idea envisaged by Nimzowitsch when he opened the a3-f8 diagonal for his bishop with b4-b5.

The game continued:

**35.Qxg7+ Kxg7 36.bxc6 bxc6 37.Nf3 c5 38.Ne5 Bc7 39.Nc4 Kf7 40.g3 Bd8  
41.Ba5 Be7 42.Bc7 Ke6 43.Nb6 h6 44.h4g5 45.h5g4 46.Be5**

And, much too late, Black resigned.

In the following game Black comes a cropper because his pieces are wrong-footed.

□ **O’Kelly de Galway, Alberic**

■ **Castaldi, Vincenzo**

Hilversumzt 1947 (1)



At first sight this position seems OK for Black. White is suffering from an isolated pawn that can be blockaded with ...Nb6-d5. What does stand out is the great activity of the white rooks.

**19...Bc8?**

With one blow, this move changes the position from quite playable to very hard to handle for Black. The correct path was 19...Rd7, even though White would also have the better prospects after 20.Qc5!.

**20.Qc5!**

With this queen move White steps up the pressure, and now he is ready for 21.Ng5.



### 20...Qd6?

But this is a really serious mistake. Slowly Black's pieces are ending up on the wrong squares.

Better was 20...Nd5, with the possible continuation 21.Bxd5 Rxd5 22.Qa3 (on 22.Qxa7, 22...Bg4! is strong) 22...Bg4 23.Rxb7 (23.Ne5 is no better in view of 23...Bc8!, and 23.Re8 Qd6 is also completely equal) 23...Bxf3 24.Qxf3 Qxf3 25.gxf3 a5, and probably Black will be able to keep the game within drawing margins.

### 21.Qa5

The immediate 21.Qg5 also definitely deserved attention.

### 21...Qb8?

Much too passive. Black could still have tried 21...Bg4, although by now his prospects are not very rosy: 22.Ng5 Qxd4 (22...Nd5 is simply met by 23.Rxb7) 23.Bxf7+, and it is over for Black.



## 22.Qg5!

Now that the black pieces are tucked away on the queenside, White comes up with this queen switch to the kingside.

## 22...Nd5

In desperation, Black closes off the a2-g8 diagonal. The consequences of 22... Qd6 23.Qh6 Qf6 24.Ng5 Qg7 25.Nxf7 would also have been disastrous for him.

## 23.Qh6

And Black resigned, since there is nothing to be found against the threat of 24.Ng5. In this game the black player went astray because he neglected the cooperation between his pieces. Consequently, several pieces became passive, whereas all of the white player's pieces became active. This surplus in activity resulted in an unstoppable attack on the king.

In the following game, one single piece is very much in the way of its own colleagues. As a result, the black player is greatly hampered in his manoeuvres. This leads to disharmony in his position, which the white player manages to exploit admirably.

NI 24.11 (E33)

□ **Gurevich, Mikhail**

■ **Timman, Jan**

Rotterdam 1990 (3)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 Nc6 5.Nf3 d6 6.Bd2 0-0 7.a3 Bxc3 8.Bxc3 Qe7 9.g3 e5 10.d5 Nd8?



Timman must have regretted this. The knight should not go to this square, since here it seriously disturbs the harmonious set-up of the black pieces. As we will see, the knight will still be standing here at the end of the game. Better was 10... Nb8, although also here Black has not solved his opening problems yet.

### **11.Bg2 Bg4?**

It would have been better to create some kind of future for his knight on d8. For that purpose, Black probably should have moved his king's knight, intending to prepare 12...f5 or 12...f6, vacating the f7-square for the unfortunate queen's knight. After the game the players looked at two interesting possibilities, which prove that the position is not so bad for Black:

A) 11...Ng4!? 12.h3 Nh6 13.Bd2 f5 14.Bxh6 gxh6 15.e3 f4, with counterplay;

B) 11...Nh5 12.e3 f5 13.0-0-0 Nf7 14.Nh4 g6 15.f4, and White is a tad better.

### **12.Nh4!**

A strong move by the chess-playing Russo-Belgian Turk. White is eyeing the f5-square, and at the same time gets ready for the push f2-f4.

### **12...c6 13.0-0 cxd5 14.cxd5 Qd7**

By the exchange of the light-squared bishops, Black wants to bring some relief to his cramped position, but he has reckoned without his opponent.



### 15.f4!

Now that the black pieces are unfortunately placed, White considers it time to act. He is threatening 16.fxe5, or, possibly, to lock in the black bishop with 16.h3 Bh5 17.g4, followed by 18.f5.

### 15...Qb5 16.e4

Much stronger than 16.fxe5?, which after 16...Nxd5 is playable for Black. Perhaps 16.Qd2 was even to be preferred. After 16... Bxe2 17. fxe5 dxe5 18.Rfe1, White's chances should be regarded highly.

### 16...Be2

A dubious plan, which meets with an energetic counter by White. However, it is not easy to suggest a worthy alternative for Black.

For instance, after 16...Nd7 17.Rae1 f6 18.h3 Bh5 19.Nf5 Qb6+ 20.Qf2, Black also lands in virtually insurmountable trouble. In order to protect the weakness on d6 he has to play 20...Nf7, but this, in turn, will cause trouble for his bishop on h5. This illustrates how badly the black pieces are standing in each other's way. One illustrative variation: 20...Nf7 21.g4 Bg6 22.Ne7+ Kh8 23.f5, leading to a lost position for Black.



### 17.Rfe1

Gurevich is not to be tempted into interesting sacrificial play, but directs his fire at the vulnerability of the black bishop. In the tournament book, IM Cor van Wijgerden, who had commented on the game for the spectators, gives the following spectacular line that they had found together: 17.fxe5, and now:

A) 17...Bxf1 18.exf6 Bxg2 19.fxg7 Re8 20.Nf5;

B) Nor is any solace offered by 17...Bd3 18.Qd2 Nxe4 19.Bxe4 Bxe4 20.exd6 Qxd5 21.Qxd5 Bxd5 22.Nf5, and the white domination is decisive;

C) Van Wijgerden himself remarks that unfortunately, 17...Ng4!? puts a spanner in the works. However, closer investigation shows that White can obtain an advantage then too, with 18.exd6 Bxf1 19.Bxf1 Qc5+ 20.Kh1, and the white pieces are cooperating excellently;

D) 17...dxe5 18.Rxf6 gxf6 19.Nf5, and White has a strong attack.

### 17...Bd3 18.Qd2 Re8

The move 18...Ng4 looks like a nice try for Black to take control, but after the measured reply 19.Bf3! h5 20.h3 Nf6, the knight must return empty-handed, and Black has got himself into an even tighter spot.

Neither does 18...Qc4 offer a solution. Here, 19.b3! is absolutely the best continuation. After 19...Qa6 20.fxe5 Ng4 21.Nf5, Black no longer has any say in things, either.

### 19.KM

Useful prophylaxis, after which Black finds himself in big trouble. His bishop on d3 is 'hanging in the air' and he also has to reckon with the threat of 20.Nf5, after which the pawn on d6 cannot be protected anymore (20...Qa6 21.Nxd6! Qxd6 22.Qxd3). Here we see how badly the black pieces are cooperating.



In the tournament book, Van Wijgerden indicates that the immediate 19.Nf5, with the double threat of 20.Nxd6 and 20.fxe5, would also have been strong.

### 19...g6

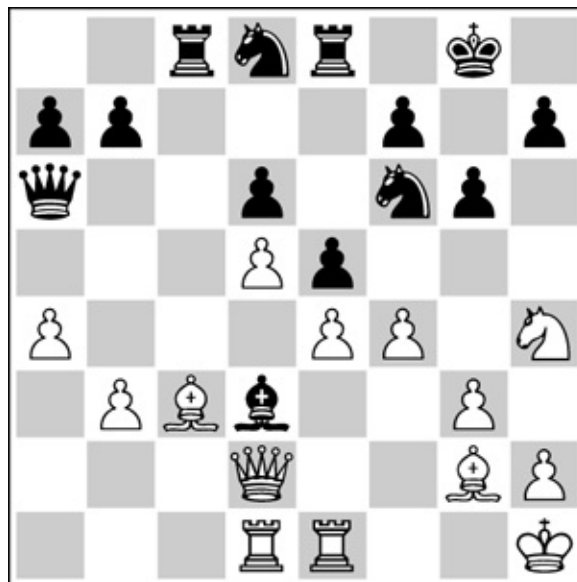
It is hard to suggest something sensible for Black, but with the text move he jumps from the frying-pan into the fire. The knight must be kept from f5, but the remedy is worse than the disease. The weakening of the dark squares on the kingside has unpleasant consequences for Black, as will become clear shortly.

### 20.a4 Qa6 21.b3!

Seizing the last square that Black had for his bishop, so that the latter will be the chief target in the following.

### 21...Rc8 22.Bf3!

White does not want to enter the complications arising after 22.Rad1.



Analysis diagram

Black would then have had to go into swindle mode with 22...Ng4, which leads to the following variations:

A) 23.h3? Rxc3! 24.Qxc3 Nf2+ 25.Kh2 Nxd1 26.Rxd1 Bxe4 27.fxe5 (certainly not 27.Bxe4? Qe2+, and Black has the last laugh) 27...Rxe5, and Black can finally breathe a sigh of relief.

B) However, 23.Rc1! is a good reply, as is shown by:

B1) 23...Qb6? fails to 24.Bf3! Nf2+ 25.Kg2, and the black pieces have become entangled in each other;

B2) 23...exf4 24.Qxf4 Ne5, but here also, White's position is preferable after 25.Qf6;

B3) 23...Nf6, and now 24.Re3 is again met by 24...Ng4, but 24.Bf3 is very

strong. White is simply threatening 25.Red 1, after which the bishop on d3 is lost.

**22...Nd7 23.Rad1 Nc5**

The only way temporarily to save the bishop, but it will not help.

**24.fxe5**

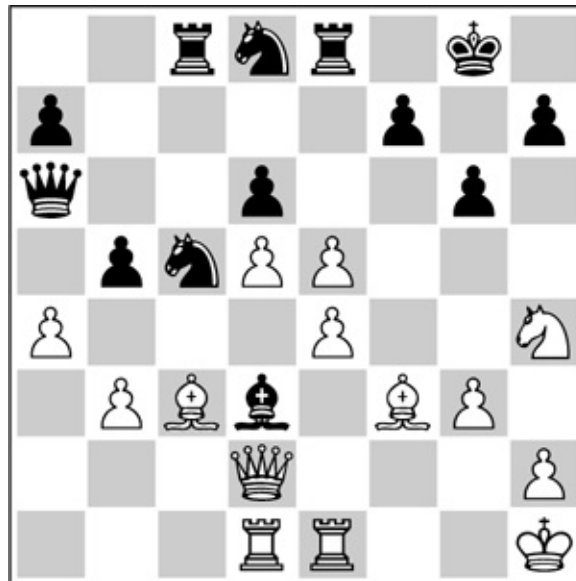
The beginning of the end. The black position will soon collapse.

By the way, the text move is better than 24.b4?, which fails to 24...Nxa4.

White had another good possibility in 24.Re3, after which Black does not have the miraculous escape he has been planning with 24...Bf1, as after 25.Qe1! Bd3 26.fxe5 dxe5 27.b4, the curtain also falls.

**24...b5**

Panic. Taking back on e5 is not on for Black. After 24...dxe5 25.Bb4!, White wins a piece. For example, 25...f5 26.exf5! (a killer. Also after 26.Bxc5 fxe4 27.Ba3 Rc2 28.Qe3 exf3 29.Qxd3 Qxd3 30.Rxd3 f2 31.Rf1, White wins. 'In all these lines, the cheerless position of the black knight stands out', Van Wijgerden adds superfluously) 26...e4 27.Qe3 b6 28.Bxc5 bxc5 29.Rxd3.



□ **Proposition 1.** *If*

■ **Alekhine, Alexander**











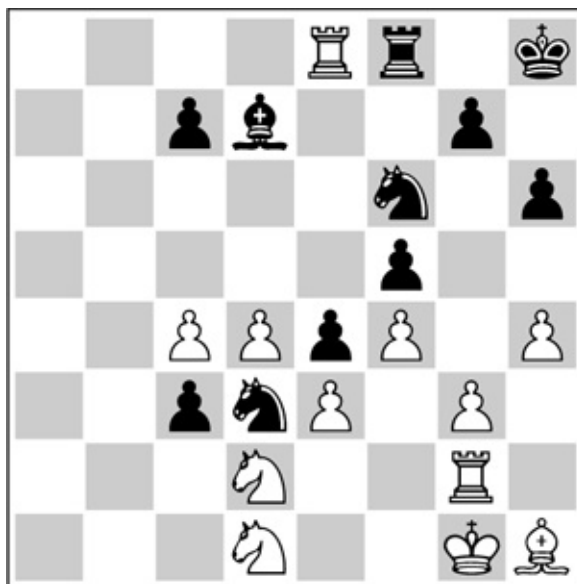
In the preceding phase White has had little to say, and so any harmony in his piece play is hard to find. With his next move Alekhine starts a combination that is unequalled in its kind.

An introduction to a brilliant concept.

After 30.Qa1 Rxa5 31.Qxa5 Qa8! 32.Qxc7 (even worse is 32.Qxa8 Rxa8 33.Nb3 Ra3, and Black's b-pawn cannot be stopped) 32...Qa1, the black queen wreaks havoc in the white position.

Alekhine's imaginative vision is astonishing. It is really a pity that with the perfunctory 30...Qxa8 31.Qb3 Qa1 another winning position could have been reached, since here also, none of the white pieces are functioning well.

### 31.Rxe8



### **31 ...c2!!**

The extraordinarily surprising point of the combination. In exchange for two rooks Black promotes to a new queen, which will leave a trail of destruction in the disorientated white camp.

After 31...Rxe8?, all would have been for nothing. With 32.Nxc3, White escapes by his skin of his teeth.

### **32.Rxf8+ Kh7 33.Nf2 c1Q+ 34.NH Ne1!**

As a rule, a queen and a knight cooperate excellently in the attack. As before, we can see a total lack of coordination between the white pieces.

### **35.Rh2 Qxc4**

Apart from capturing a pawn, Black brings a new piece into play. The threat of 36...Bb5 becomes acute.

Also definitely worthy of consideration was 35...Nc2, after which the pawn on e3 is doomed.

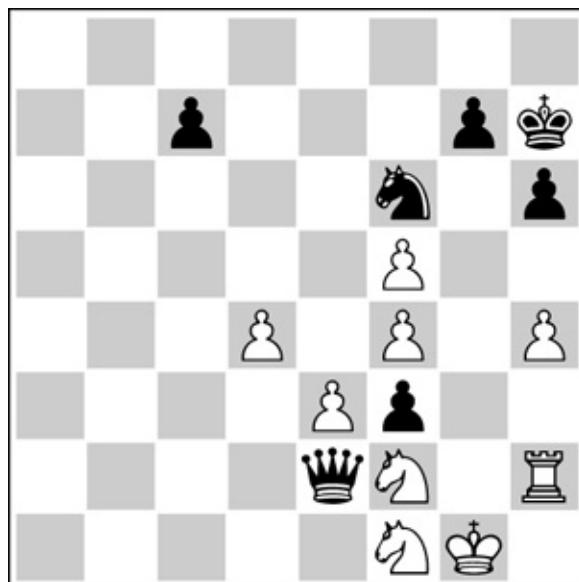
### **36.Rb8**

White has no satisfactory solution to the above-mentioned threat. For example, after 36.Nd1 Bb5 37.Rf2 Ng4 he will also have a decisive material disadvantage.

### **36...Bb5 37.Rxb5**

The only possibility to continue the struggle.

### **37...Qxb5 38.g4 Nf3+ 39.Bxf3 exf3 40.gxf5 Qe2**



### 41.d5

White cannot move a single piece for fear of losing the crucial e3 pawn.

41.Ng3 is met by 41...Qxe3, and 41.Rh3 loses to 41...Ng4.

### 41...Kg8

With this 'macho move', Alekhine underlines Black's helplessness. It is amusing to see how Black holds the position in his grip. The white pieces can hardly move.

### 42.h5 Kh7!

Slightly sadistically, Black waits until White runs out of pawn moves and then strikes home. The white player could have spared himself the following slaughter.

**43.e4 Nxe4 44.Nxe4 Qxe4 45.d6 cxd6 46.f6 gxf6 47.Rd2 Qe2**

Alekhine likes to have a good laugh.

**48.Rxe2 fxe2 49.Kf2 exf1Q+ 50.Kxf1 Kg7 51.Ke2 Kf7 52.Ke3**

Of course, 52.f5 wouldn't have helped either after 52...d5 53.Kd3 Ke7 54.Ke3 Kd6 55.Kd4 Kc6 56.Kd3 Kc5, etc.

**52...Ke6 53.Ke4 d5+**

**0-1**

## Exercises

19.1



It is clear that Black's pieces on the queenside are somewhat tied up. Indicate how White can take advantage of this. Calculate a few variations to add strength to your verdict.

[Solution](#)

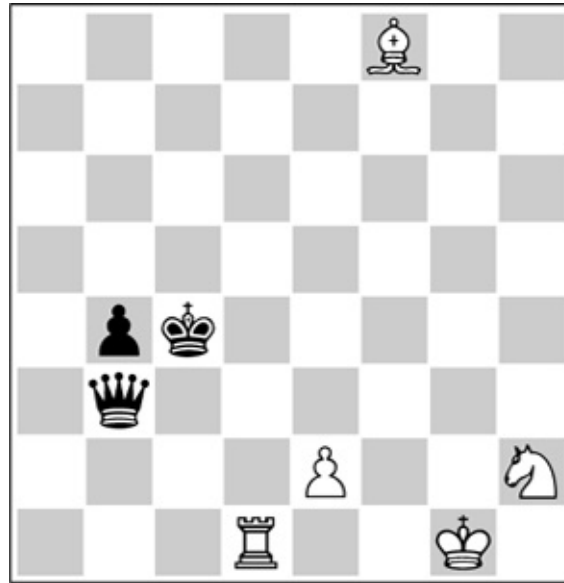
19.2



How does White exploit the lack of harmony in the enemy camp?

[Solution](#)

19.3

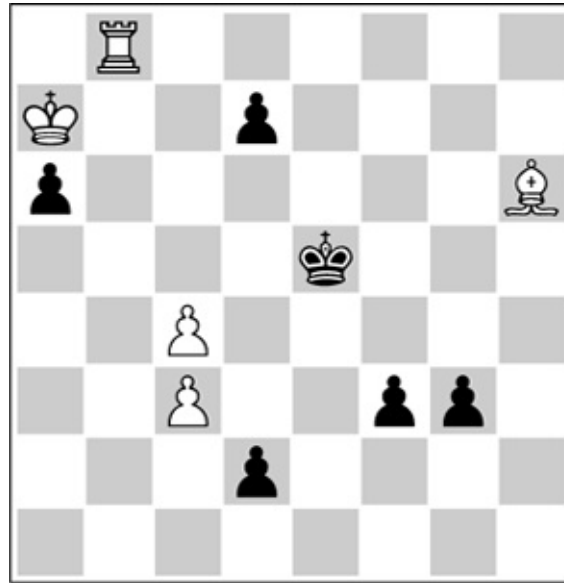


In principle, rook and two pieces win against a queen. But if the pieces are far removed from each other and there are also few pawns on the board, as here, the win appears to be an illusion. Still, White disposes of an exceptionally beautiful method to make his pieces cooperate optimally. How is this done?

[Solution](#)



19.4



By normal means the black pawns cannot be stopped anymore. Therefore, something special is required here. How does White do it?

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 20

# Lead in development

### 20.1 Introduction

Capablanca once expressed the fear that chess would soon die a ‘draw death’. If technique is mastered to perfection, there is no way to break through for any of the two sides, he thought. Fortunately, this defeatism has not become reality. On the contrary: in present-day grandmaster practice, games are fought out to the death, which makes the draw rate – even in top tournaments – relatively low. Under Kasparov’s influence, even gambit play has returned to the elite level. For example, the 13th World Champion more than once ventured the Evans Gambit, which occurs after **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4!?**. And with success: esteemed opponents like Anand and Piket had to bite the dust against him.

In all gambits, material plays a secondary role. A player who invests material does this exclusively with the intention to bring his own pieces into play as quickly as possible, whereas a number of his opponent’s pieces remain on their original squares. Everything revolves around the activity of one’s own pieces and the passivity of the opponent’s pieces. We call this a ‘lead in development’. There are different possible causes for the occurrence of a development advantage. For example, careless piece play (moving out the queen too quickly, or playing with the same piece twice) can lead to a lag in development. Another cause can be a faulty exchange. In one of his manuals, Euwe indicated the difference between exchanging and having your opponent exchange. The player who exchanges a piece himself will bring his opponent’s pieces into play in many cases. Too many pawn moves can have disastrous consequences as well. In the following game we see how gambit play leads to quick development, and even to a furious attack on the king.

SD 4.5 (B01)

□ **Sokolov,Andrey**

■ **Speelman,Jonathan**

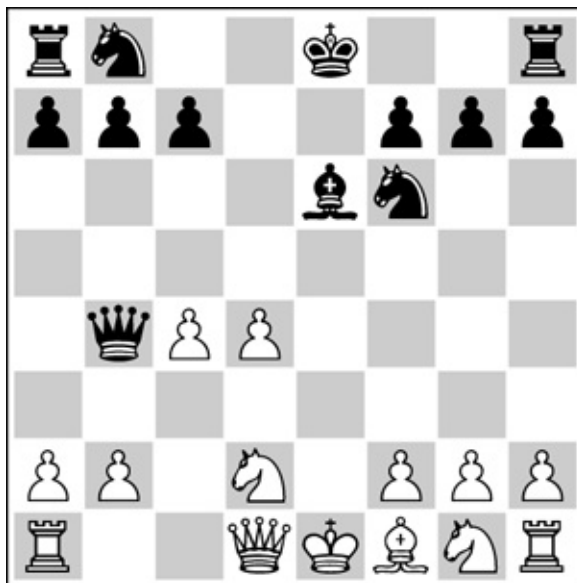
Madrid rapid 1989 (3)

### 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.c4 e6

A curious gambit, which is not as bad as it looks at first sight. Black gives up a centre pawn in order to bring two pieces into play.

### 4.dxe6 Bxe6 5.d4 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 Qe7 7.Bxb4 Qxb4+ 8.Nd2

The alternative 8.Qd2 is played more frequently.



### 8...Nc6!?

This move is what this gambit is about, Black does not bother about material and brings up new artillery.

### 9.Nf3

White does not go for the pawn fork that Black allowed with his last move.

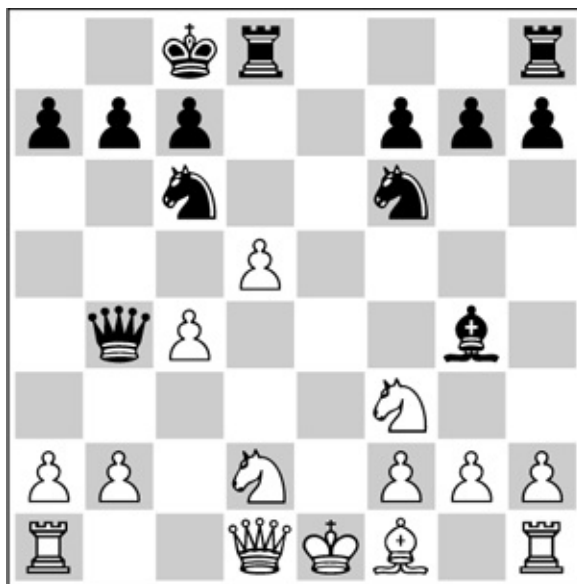
The move 9.d5 leads, after 9...0-0-0!, to the following complications:

A) 10.dxe6 Rhe8 11.Be2 Rxe6, and White can no longer defend against the many threats;

B) 10.Be2 Rhe8, and Black has sufficient compensation for the lost piece;

C) 10.dxc6 Rhe8 11.cxb7+ Kb8 12.Be2 (better is 12.f3, although also then, after 12...Bxc4+ 13.Be2 Qxb2 Black has more than enough play for the sacrificed material) 12...Ne4 13.Nf3 Nxd2 14.Nxd2 Bxc4, and Black wins back his piece with interest.

### 9...0-0-0 10.d5 Bg4



### 11.Be2

Once again White does not accept the piece. Whether this is justified, is debatable. After 11.dxc6 Rhe8+ 12.Be2 Bxf3 13.gxf3, Black has a choice between two moves to maintain the pressure:

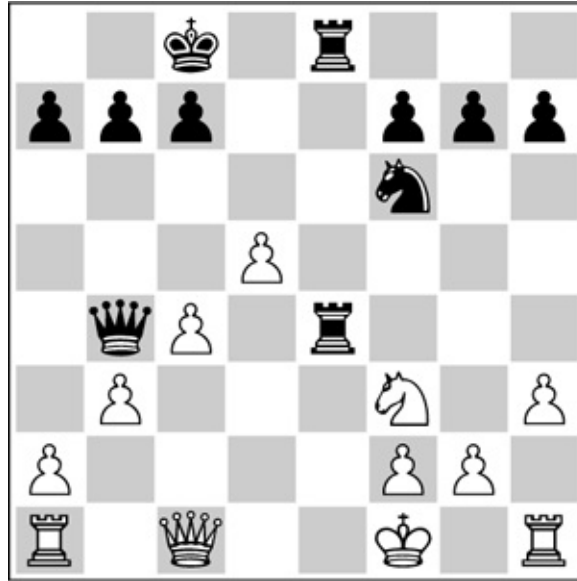
A) 13...Re6 seems insufficient in view of 14.a3 Qa5 (after 14...Qe7? White has a hidden possibility to untangle himself: 15.0-0 Red6 16.Qb3!, and Black remains a piece down) 15.cxb7+ Kb8 16.c5!?, (the silicon monster comes up with this move. Not 16.b4 Qe5 17.Ra2 Nh5!, and Black wins back the piece; or 16.Qc2 Rde8 17.0-0-0 Rxe2 and also here, Black has his piece back, and he has splendid compensation for the pawns he has lost along the way) 16...Rxe2+!? (Black must take action now; 16...Rde8 17.0-0 Rxe2 18.Nb3 Qa4 19.Nd4 is very good, if not winning for White) 17.Qxe2 (17.Kxe2? Qb5+ 18.Ke1 Re8+, and Black wins) 17...Re8 18.Qxe8+ Nxe8 19.Rc1, and White has the better prospects, although Black is by no means without chances.

B) After 13...Nh5 14.a3 (14.Qc2 g6 15.cxb7+ Kb8 16.a3 Qe7 17.Nf1) 14...Qe7, Black will follow up with the devastating 15...Nf4.

### 11...Bxf3 12.Bxf3 Rhe8+ 13.Kf1

White must give up the right to castle, and as a consequence he cannot get the h1 rook into the game. Now Black clearly gets the upper hand.

### 13...Nd4 14.Qc1 Nxf3 15.Nxf3 Re4 16.b3 Rde8 17.h3



The diagram position shows the difference in activity between the white and the black pieces. All this for one lousy pawn!

**17...Nh5!18.g3?!**

A provocation. Speelman immediatel picks up the gauntlet.

**18...Nxg3+!?**

A piece sacrifice with which the protection of the king is shattered.

**19.fxg3 Re3 20.Ng1?!**

Oddly enough, White should have opted for 20.Kg2!, with which he could have brought his h1 rook into play. Black has nothing better than 20...Re2+ 21.Kf1, after which this game would have ended peacefully with a repetition of moves.

**20...Qd6!**

An elegant retreat. The queen aims at the weak point g3 and threatens to intervene decisively via the third rank.

**21.Rh2**

21.Qb2 was relatively better.

**21 ...Rxc3 22.Qb2 Qg6! 23.Kf2 Ree3!**

Threatening 24...Qf5, against which there is nothing sensible to be found.

**24.Ne2 Rgf3+**

Not bad, but Speelman misses a nice mate in three: 24...Qf5+ 25.Ke1 Rg1+ 26.Kd2 Qd3#.

**25.Ke1 Qg1+ 26.Kd2 Qxh2 27.Re1 Qf2**

**0-1**

In my youth, my then chess trainer Huub van Dong en encouraged me to play gambits. ‘That will teach you to play good chess’, he said. He taught me an opening variation where the fat is in the fire almost from the very start.

With pleasure I present an illustrative little game from those days. Both sides

made a lot of mistakes, but the tactical possibilities are so attractive that we might be justified preserving it for posterity:

RL 15.3 (C84)

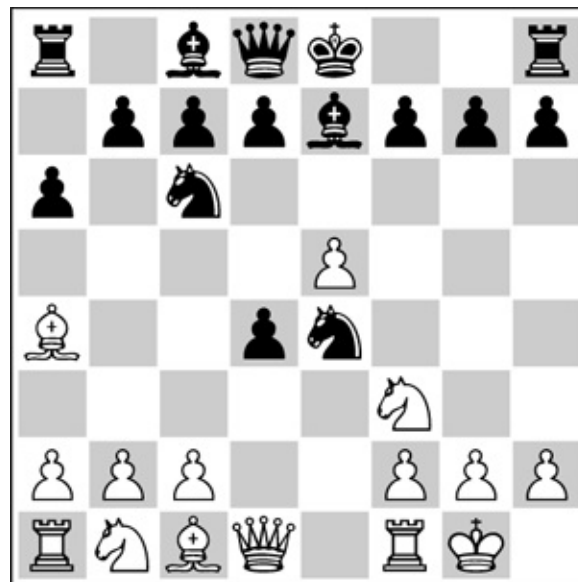
□ **Grooten,Herman**

■ **Smit,Arjan**

Uden 1975

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.e5 Ne4 7.0-0 Be7**

A normal move here is 8.Qe2, but after 8...Nc5 Black has no more problems. In *Schach-Archw*, a German periodical that included opening variations, the following strange little move had been recommended.



**8.b4?!**

With this bizarre pawn sacrifice (first played on international level by the Philippine Eugenio Torre), White takes the c5-square from the black knight and he now annoyingly threatens to force the beast to declare itself with 9.Qe2 or 9.Re1. At first sight this pawn move looks hardly justifiable positionally, but there is more to it than meets the eye!

**8...Bxb4**

The principled move.

At least reasonably playable for White is 8...Nxb4, in view of 9.Qxd4 f5 10.Bb3 b5 11.c3 c5 12.Qe3 c4 13.cxb4 cxb3 14.Qxb3, and for the time being Black cannot castle.

Also 8...0-0 is known from the game Torre-Wagman, Reggio Emilia 1972/73,

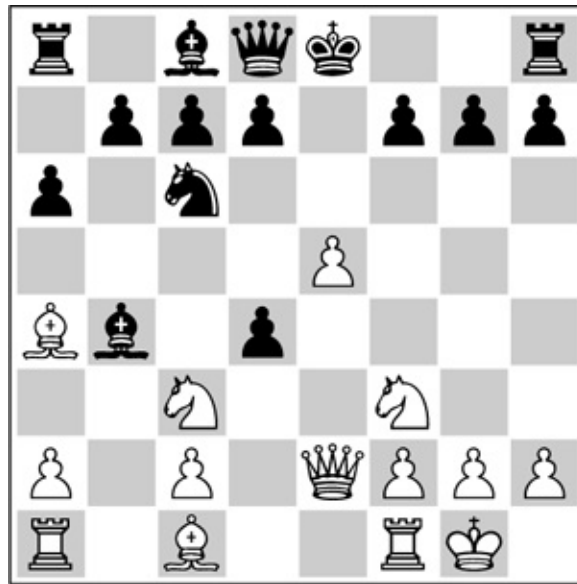
where there followed: 9.a3 f6 10.Re1 Ng5 11.Nxg5 fxc3 12.c3, and White had a promising position.

Safer is 8...Nc3, which Karpov played in the Junior World Championship 1969 against Torre. If after 9.Nxc3 dxc3 10.a3 0-0, White had continued with 11.Qd3! (as in two games by Dmitry Godes in the 1960's), he would just have been better. Torre tried to disturb Black's development with 11.Qd5, but got into trouble after 11...b5 12.Bb3 Bb7.

### 9.Qe2 Nc3

Forced. One point of the pawn sacrifice becomes clear after 9...Nc5? 10.Bxc6 dxc6 11.Qc4 a5 12.a3 Be6 13.Qxd4 Qxd4 14.Nxd4, and White has won material. 9...Bc3 10.Qxe4 Bxa1 11.Bg5 gives White a dangerous initiative.

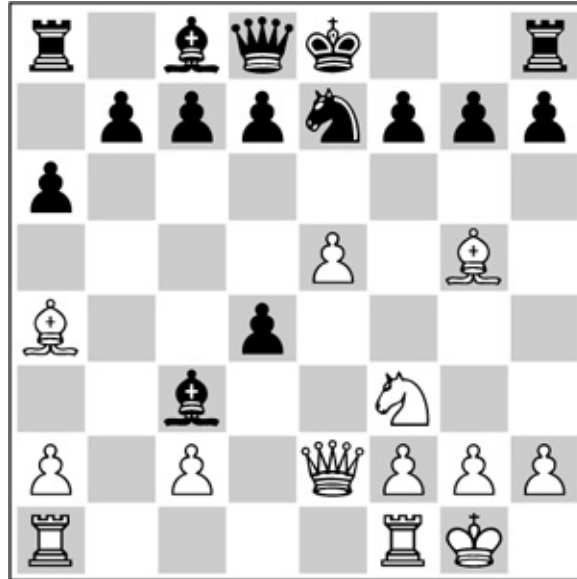
### 10.Nxc3



### 10...dxc3

The safest option.

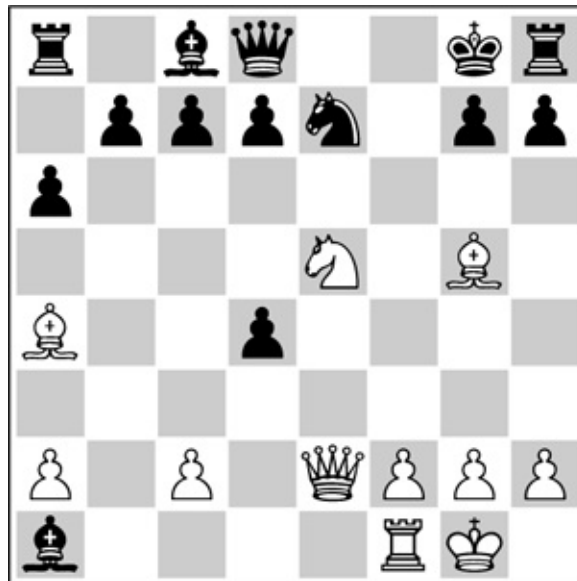
But who wouldn't play 10...Bxc3 here? After 11.Bg5 Ne7, White's development advantage has taken on huge proportions. Therefore, drastic measures are in order here.



Analysis diagram

As a young player, I analysed the following exciting variations: 12.e6!?. Now there are two possibilities:

A) 12...Bxa1?. The greedy variation, which is refuted quickly: 13.exf7+ Kxf7 14.Ne5+ Kg8.



Analysis diagram

A1) Here I had wanted to make a pretty pseudo-sacrifice with 15.Ng6!?, after which the white pieces can intervene decisively: 15...hxc6 16.Bxe7. My main line continued with 16...Qe8? 17.Bb3+ Kh7 18.Qe4! d5 19.Qh4+ Kg8

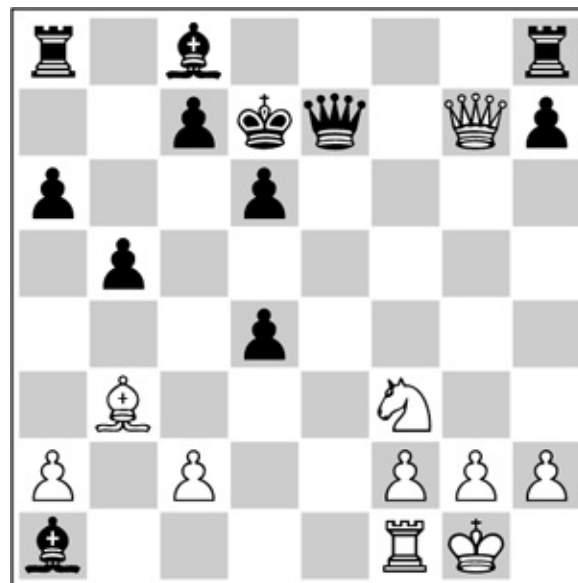


20.Bxd5+, and the white attack crashes through. But unfortunately, the nasty zwischenzug 16...d3!? puts a spanner in the works. After 17.Bb3+ d5 18.Qe4! Kh7 19.Bxd5, Black must give up the queen with 19...Bf6 20.Bxd8 Rxd8, but after 21.cxd3 White keeps the better of the play;

A2) 15.Nxd7! is a real killer. Interference moves like ...d7-d5 have been ruled out, and Black's defence given in the other line is not possible now: 15...Bxd7 16.Bb3+ Kf8 17.Re1, winning.

B) Better is 12...fxe6, since 13.Qxe6 b5 looks OK for Black. But then White can opt for the strong 14.Qe5!?, which keeps the attack going.

B1) White also wins in a magnificent way after 14...Bxa1 15.Bb3 d6 16.Qxg7 Kd7 17.Bxe7 Qxe7



Analysis diagram

18.Be6+!!;

B2) On 14...bxa4 there follows 15.Rae1! Bxe1 16.Rxe1 0-0 17.Bxe7 Qe8 18.Qd5+, winning;

B3) 14...d6 is the correct defence, after which the critical variation runs as follows: 15.Qxg7 Rg8 16.Qxh7 Rxd5 (Black must eliminate the strong bishop) 17.Nxd5 bxa4 18.Rae1!? (White immediately throws in another exchange, so as to maintain his lead in development) 18...Bxe1 19.Rxe1.

At the cost of quite a lot of material, White has maintained his initiative. The black king is still dwelling in the centre and the black pieces don't cooperate. It seems that White has (more than) enough compensation.

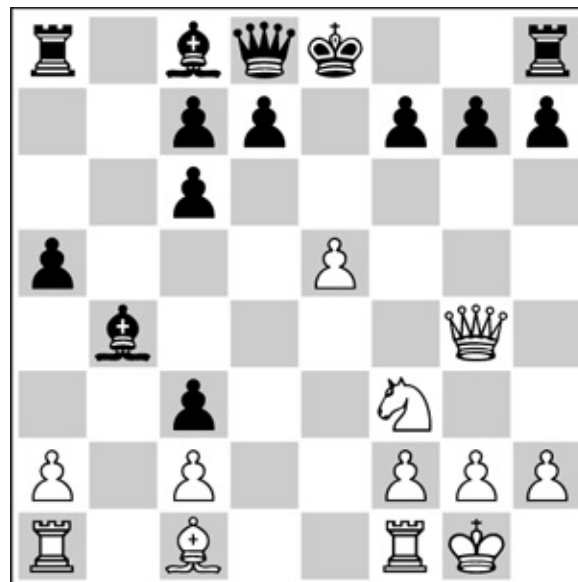
C) 12...f6! is an interesting and, probably, also strong reply to this sharp attempt. This possibility was found by the young Anne Haast in her game with

the also youthful Maurice Swinkels, Geldrop 2007: 13.Ne5!? (Maurice opts for the sharpest move. After the 'normal' 13.Rad1 White can only try to limit the damage as much as possible, but it is not probable that he will obtain sufficient compensation for the pawns: 13...c5 (13...fxg5?! 14.Nxd4 b5 15.Qf3 is quite obscure) 14.Bd2 Bxd2 15.Rxd2 (15.Bxd7+Bxd7 16.exd7+Qxd7 17.Rxd2 yields too little compensation) 15...b5 16.exd7+Qxd7 17.Bb3 Bb7 18.c3 Kf8 19.Be6, and White can still try to muddy the waters, but that is about all) 13...0-0 (Black brings her king into safety as quickly as possible, as many of White's pieces are now hanging) 14.exd7 d3?! (probably this is not the most accurate continuation. Black could have played quite materialistically with 14...Bxa1 15.dxc8Q Rxc8 16.Rxa1 (16.Bb3+ Kh8) 16...fg5, and White does not have sufficient compensation. By the way, certainly not 16...fxe5?, as after 17.Qxe5 the many pins would kill Black) 15.Nxd3?!. The white player does not find the best plan either. After this move Black is winning, and Anne did not fail to convert it. Preferable was 15.Qxd3 Bxe5 (15...Bxa1 16.Rxa1 fxg5 17.Rd1 with equality) 16.Rae1 b5 17.dc8Q and also here, White has enough.

### 11.Bxc6 bxc6

Black cannot open the d-file, as then he will fall victim on that file: 11...dxc6 12.Bg5 Be7 13.Rad1 Bd7 14.e6! fxe6 15.Ne5, and White has an enormous attack. An illustrative example: 15...Bxg5 16.Qh5+ g6 17.Nxg6, and Black will not escape alive.

### 12.Qc4a5 13.Qg4



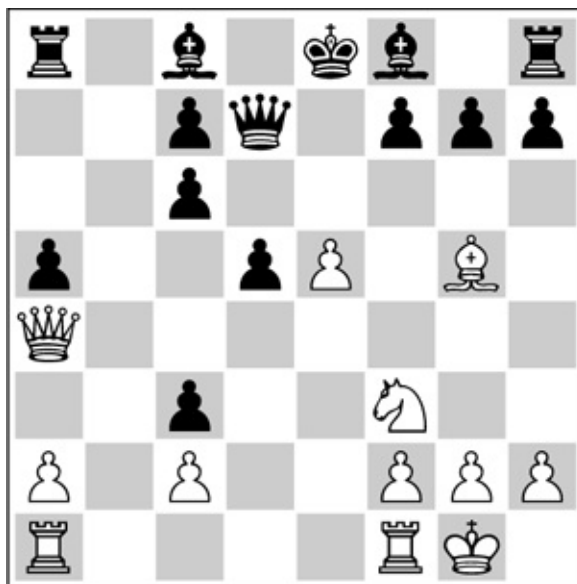
### 13...Bf8?!

Played after a long think. Theory books recommend 13...Kf8!?. A possible continuation is: 14.Bg5 Be7 15.Rab1, and White has compensation for the

sacrificed pawns.

Other moves are dangerous for Black. For example, 13...g6 is not to be recommended in view of 14.Bg5 d5 (after 14...Be7 15.Rfe1!, White has strong pressure on the dark squares) 15.e6! Bxe6 16.Qd4, and White wins material. In a game Grooten-Faber, played two years later, Black sacrificed the exchange with 13...0-0!? 14.Bh6 g6, for which he obtained some compensation.

**14.Bg5d5 15.Qa4 Qd7**



**16.e6!**

White does not care about one pawn more or less. His pieces are much more active than Black's, while the enemy king is also still stuck in the centre. Which is one more reason to open files there.

**16...fxe6?**

Here Black should definitely have continued with 16...Qd6 17.exf7+ Kxf7, which, however, would also have led to a white advantage after 18.Bf4.

**17.Rfe1?**

An ugly miss that could have cost me the game. It's incredible that I didn't deal the decisive blow with 17.Ne5!. Now Black loses his queen after 17...Qd6 18.Qf4! since the invasion on f7 cannot be averted. After 18...Be7 19.Qf7+ Kd8 20.Bxe7+ Qxe7 21.Nxc6+, White wins.

**17...Bd6?!**

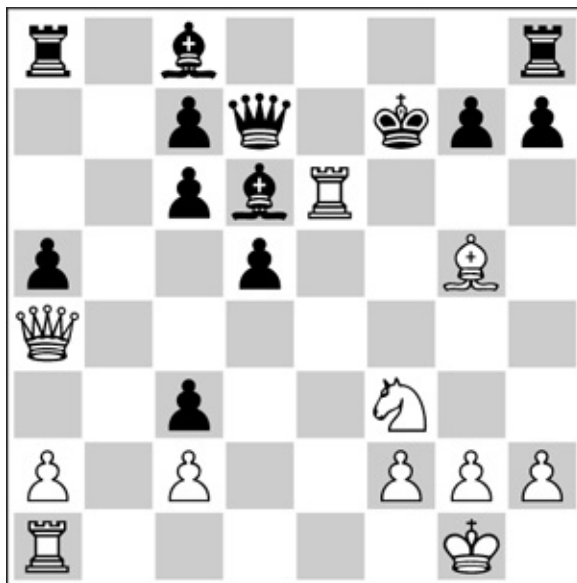
Much stronger was 17...Bb4!, since after 18.a3 Bc5 19.Ne5 Qd6 Black has no problems whatsoever.

**18.Rxe6+**

White must take now, as otherwise he will be too much material behind, whilst the black player threatens to complete his development.

### 18...Kf7?

The black player had fallen into time-trouble, and because of this he made a mistake. A better defence was 18...Qxe6, which would have led to an unclear struggle after 19.Qxc6+ Kf7 20.Qxa8 Re8 21.Qxa5.



### 19.Rae1?

The orgy of mistakes merrily continues. The nice thing about this game is the multitude of beautiful motifs, most of which are missed by both – still inexperienced – players.

With the beautiful 19.Re7+, White could have won the queen. 19...Bxe7 20.Ne5+ is a banal knight fork, but it does win!

### 19...Qxe6 20.Rxe6 Bxe6 21.Qxc6 Rab8 22.Kf1?

Very strange. The right move was 22.g3, but Black is already slightly better.

### 22...Rb2?!

The normal continuation was 22...Rhe8!, completing his development, and in the meantime bringing on some heavy anti-aircraft guns. It looks as if White will come to grief here.

### 23.Qxc3?!

Now White could have got back into the game with 23.Nd4!.

### 23...Rxa2?!

Black has set his sights on the passed a-pawn, but now he is confronted with a problem on the other side of the board.

With 23...Rb1 24.Ke2 Re8 25.Be3 Bd7! it would have been the white king's turn to be cornered.

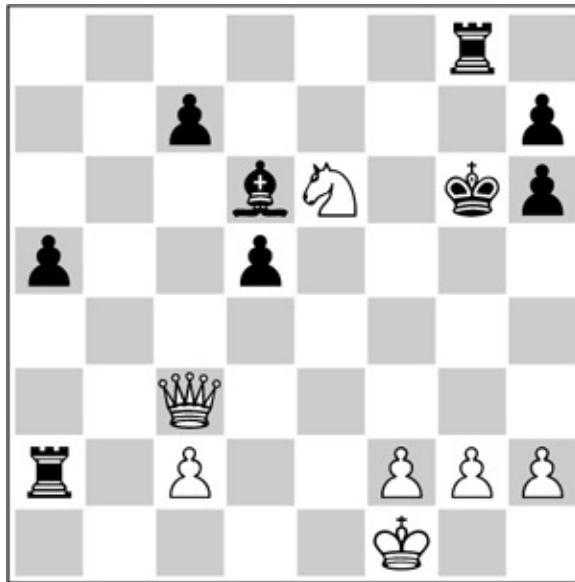
### 24.Bh6!

Finally White makes a good move again. He exploits the fact that Black has not

yet brought his h8 rook into play. And Black will pay dearly for this.

**24...Rg8 25.Ng5+ Kg6 26.Nxe6 Kxh6**

It is interesting to see how White can secure the loot after 26...gxh6:



Analysis diagram

With the obscure 27.Qc6!, White introduces a pin along the sixth rank, and with it the lethal threat of 28.Nxc7. Furthermore, the important d5 pawn is hanging. This position once more proves the adage that queen plus knight form a very dangerous attacking tandem.

**27.g3**

Whatever drove me to play this move I still don't understand today, but fortunately this time it doesn't spoil the win. 27.Qh3+ Kg6 28.Nxc7! would have been simple enough.

**27...Ra3 28.Qd2+ Kg6**

Here, 28...g5 would not offer salvation because of 29.Nxg5 Rxg5 30.h4.

**29.Qxd5**

All coordination between the black pieces is lost, but conducting an attack remains terribly difficult for White.

Here 29.Qg5+ Kf7 30.Qxd5 Ke7 31.Nxc7 was not only more attractive, but also stronger.

**29...Re8 30.g4**

But this is the right way to continue. White creates an escape square for the king and introduces mate threats on f5 and h5 into the position.

**30...Kf6 31.Qf5+ Ke7 32.Nxg7 Rf8 33.Qxh7 Raf3 34.Nf5+ Kd8 35.Ke2**

And here the black player had had enough.

## **20.2 The typical tempo gain**

A singular phenomenon in chess is the simultaneous display. Club players find it fascinating that one man is able to handle a large number of opponents. The simultaneous player runs from board to board, and quickly makes his moves. In just a few seconds he spots which move he should play. Only sporadically does he need a little more time to correctly assess the positions, which keep changing quickly.

Even more spectacular is the blindfold simultaneous display, where the simultaneous player makes all his moves without looking at the board. In former years the American Paul Morphy was famous for his achievements in this area. Eight opponents meant nothing to him. Of the Argentinean Miguel Najdorf it is known that in 1947 he broke the blindfold simultaneous world record by achieving the incredible score of 39 wins, four draws and only two defeats on 45 boards in 23½ hours. Even more incredibly, this record was broken by the Hungarian Janos Flesch, who took on no less than 52 opponents in 1960. He won 31 games, 18 ended in a draw and only three times was he forced to concede the point to his opponent. The story goes that his opponents were not at all weak, which makes this achievement border on madness. And there are people who have cast doubts upon this achievement.

Apparently, blindfold chess is not entirely healthy for the human mind. In the former Soviet Union the top players were prohibited from engaging in this discipline. From Najdorf we know that after his record attempt, he could not sleep for three days, and that in the end he was found in a cinema, where he hung in a chair exhausted.

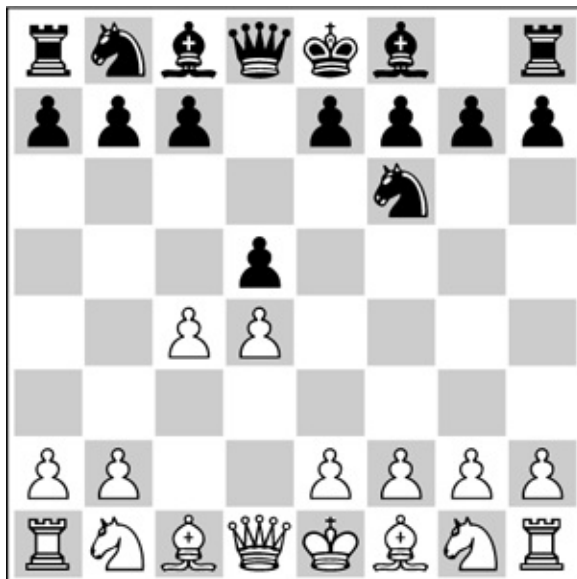
We could not give an answer here as to how and why the simultaneous player is able to achieve such results. It sounds logical that pattern recognition must play an important role. I have built up some experience as a simultaneous player in the course of the years myself. Afterwards, I was often surprised by the reason that was given for the simultaneous players success: a difference in opening knowledge. True, an experienced player will generally have more knowledge of opening systems than his opponents, but this alone does not suffice to achieve scores this high.

More importantly, his understanding of most aspects of the game is better than that of the weak club player. Knowledge of openings is certainly not the decisive factor, although people often think so. In one frequently reappearing case I have to admit that a little theoretical knowledge has served me well. In the following opening, especially in simultaneous games, players will sin against the following simple principle:

**The typical tempo gain 1**

### 1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nf6?

In his book *My System*, Nimzowitsch already pointed out this strategic mistake. Black should play 2...e6, 2...c6 or 2...dxc4 here. With the text move he loses an important tempo, and he also loses influence in the centre. With his next move White exploits the black setup. The strange thing is that this mistake is made remarkably often.



### 3.cxd5! Qxd5

Relatively best under the circumstances. After 3...Nxd5 Nimzowitsch indicates that White gets free control of the centre with 4.e4?!. But here the man is mistaken. After 4...Nf6 5.Nc3 Black has the counter-thrust 5...e5! at his disposal, which, after 6.dxe5 Qxd1+ 7.Kxd1 Ng4, leads to a position where Black is not worse.

Much more accurate is 4.Nf3! with the threat of 5.e4. After both 4...e6 5.e4 Nf6 6.Nc3 Bb4 7.Bd3 and 4...Bf5 5.Qb3! Nb6 6.Nc3, White has taken control of the centre.

### 4.Nc3 Qa5

Analogously to the Scandinavian, Black develops his queen to this square. After 4...Qd8 5.e4, White will achieve what he wants.

### 5.Nf3

And White's position is already very pleasant.

The reader understands that I have revealed an important weapon in my simultaneous displays! Here is another example where the black player not only neglects his development, but also gives up the centre without a fight.

IG 2.2 (C54)

□ **Nimzowitsch, Aaron**

■ **Amateur**

Place unknown

The white player starts by giving odds: he plays without a rook on a1 but with the a2 pawn on a3.

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3**

With this move White wants to build up a strong pawn centre.

**4...Nf6**

Black would have been wise to continue with 4...Qe7 5.d4 Bb6, after which the pawn on e5 is protected. He does not have to get mixed up in 5...exd4, which will have disastrous consequences for him in the game.

**5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb6 7.d5 Ne7 8.e5**



The white pawn centre, which has become mobile, now rolls on irresistibly.

**8...Ne4 9.d6 cxd6 10.exd6 Nxf2 11.Qb3 Nxf1 12.Bxf7+ Kf8 13.Bg5**





And Black resigned. But even though he has to give up the queen, the material damage remains within bounds. In earlier times, players used to resign as soon as they lost the queen. In our present computer age, many positions still turn out to be playable. More than that, Black can play 13...Nf5 in the final position, obtaining equal chances.

Games with odds were played often in former times. That was how the differences in playing strength were compensated for. Incidentally, in one game the absence of the rook on a1 led to great confusion. During the game, the player who had started without the Ra1, got the idea that queenside castling might save him out of a delicate situation. So suddenly he brought the mysterious move Ke1-c1 on the board. Of course, his opponent protested against this peculiar continuation. The defence of the white player was that he still had the right to castle, with the 'ghost of the rook' on a1!

Now that we have acquired a taste of playing with a lead in development, we'd better continue with another telling example.

KP 1.9 (C40)

□ **Boleslavsky, Isaak**

■ **Lilienthal, Andor**

Leningrad/Moscow ch-URS 1941 (8)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3d5?!**

A dubious opening system.

### 3.Nxe5 Qe7?

Black is stepping on the wrong track. After 3...Bd6 the position is still playable.

### 4.d4 f6 5.Nd3 dxe4 6.Nf4 Qf7?

Again a loss of time, even though the queen was quite in the way of its own pieces.

### 7.Nd2!

True, with this knight move White blocks his queen's bishop, but he does prepare 8.Bc4, taking control of the game.

### 7...Bf5 8.g4

Boleslavsky is really going for it.

### 8...Bg6 9.Bc4 Qd7 10.Qe2 Qxd4

Gobbling up pawns while the position is on fire is not to be recommended!

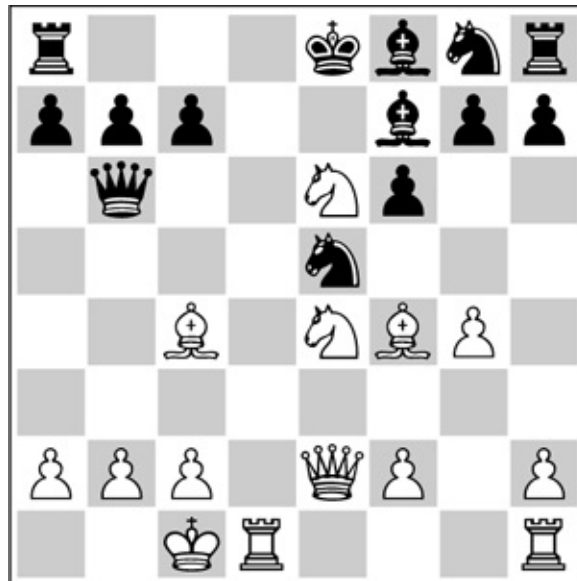
### 11.Ne6

Here, 11.Nxg6 hxg6 12.Nxe4 was even stronger.

### 11...Qb6

Also after 11...Qe5 12.f4! Qa5 13.c3, Black has no chance to survive.

### 12.Nxe4 Nd7 13.Bf4 Ne5 14.0-0-0 Bf7



Now that White has mobilized all his pieces, the decision is not far off. What follows is slaughter.

### 15.N4g5! fxg5 16.Bxe5

More elegant and even better was 16.Nxc7+! Qxc7 17.Bb5+ Ke7 18.Bxe5, and the pieces can be put back on their original squares.

### 16...Bxe6 17.Bxc7

1-0

## 20.3 Grabbing pawns can lead to a lack of activity

We have already seen that grabbing a pawn in the opening is a perilous undertaking. Grandmaster John van der Wiel once also experienced that material gain does not bring universal happiness. He was crushed by the English warhorse Julian Hodgson.

QP 7.16 (A45)

□ **Hodgson, Julian**

■ **Van der Wiel, John**

Amsterdam 1994 (4)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5**

The Trompowsky Opening, for which the white player could take out a patent by now. Hodgson has provided the system with a series of new ideas that are well worth studying. Even in pre-DVD times, videos by him already appeared on this subject...

**2...c5**

Two important alternatives here are 2...Ne4 and 2...e6.

**3.Bxf6 gxf6 4.d5 Qb6 5.Qc1 Bh6**

A nice idea.

**6.e3**

The bishop cannot be taken in view of 6.Qxh6 Qxb2, and the rook on a1 is irrevocably lost.

**6...f5**

This must still have been home preparation by Van der Wiel. However, the text move does nothing for his development.

**7.c4**

This move doesn't either, but it does strengthen White's position in the centre.

**7...f4**

In this way, Black wants to get rid of his doubled pawns, but he forgets to develop.

**8.exf4 Bxf4**



### 9.Qxf4!

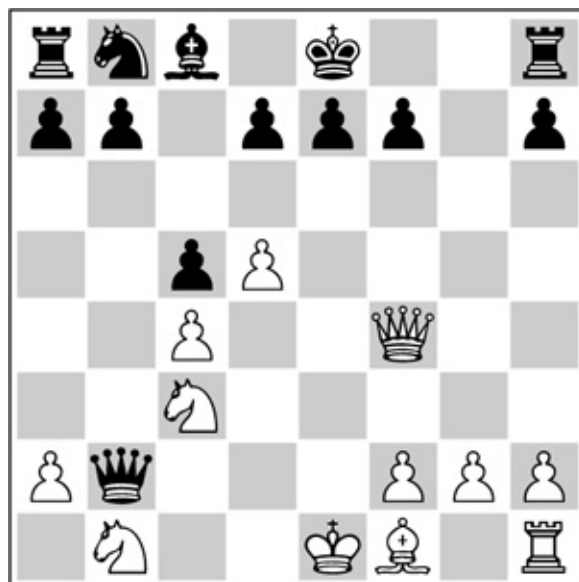
This must have been the last thing Black expected. White abandons his queenside in order to activate his pieces as quickly as possible.

### 9...Qxb2 10.Ne2 Qxa1 11.Nc3

This way Hodgson just manages to keep things together, but at first sight it is hard to imagine that White has enough compensation for the exchange and the pawn that he has sacrificed. Still, he has managed to sneak the queen and a knight into play.

### 11...Qb2

Understandably, Black wants to bring back his queen as soon as possible, so that it can assist in the defence, but maybe he should have waited a while with this. There was still time for 11...d6, since White cannot catch the queen: 12.Qd2 Bf5 13.Bd3 Bxd3 14.Qxd3 Qb2. After the text move it becomes clear that Black has brought a hornets' nest about his ears.



### **12.d6!**

White allows himself the time to play this little pawn move, the consequences of which will soon become visible. The black camp is divided in two, the square d5 is vacated for a white knight, and besides, Black's bishop on c8 is boxed in.

### **12...Nc6**

Remarkably enough, much later this position appeared on the board for a second time. None other than grandmaster Alexey Shirov got mixed up in this line against the English grandmaster (and established theoretician) Peter Wells. I happened to be in the tournament hall. In Gibraltar 2006, I took a stroll during my game and suddenly spotted this position. I couldn't believe my eyes, since I knew that the game Hodgson-Van der Wiel had appeared in several books and publications. It was clear, however, that all this was new to Shirov, since he used up oceans of time while Wells was walking around in leisurely fashion.

The first deviation occurred here: 12...Qc2, but after 13.Qe3! Shirov immediately threw in the towel and promptly left the playing hall. Rarely will he have suffered such a shameful defeat against a much lower-rated opponent.

### **13.Bd3exd6**

It's a hell of a mess for Black. Also after 13...b6 14.0-0 Bb7, both 15.Nd5 and 15.dxe7 are virtually lethal.

### **14.0-0**

It is amusing to see how White first takes his time to complete his development, before going over to the offensive.

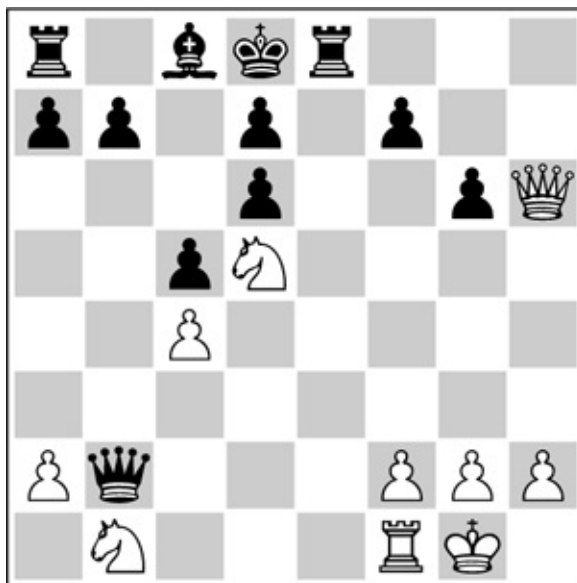
### **14...Ne5 15.Qf6**

Now 15.Re1 was even stronger, since 15...0-0 fails to 16.Rxe5 dxe5 17.Qg5+ Kh8 18.Qh6, and White is threatening mate on two squares.

### 15...0-0

The king is removed from the draughty centre, but it will soon find that it will be heavily besieged on the flank as well.

**16.Nd5 Re8 17.Qg5+ Ng6 18.Nf6+ Kf8 19.Qh6+ Ke7 20.Nd5+ Kd8 21.Bxg6 hxg6**



The irony of fate is that the black king has been chased back to the centre, where it will be trapped after all.

### 22.Nbc3!

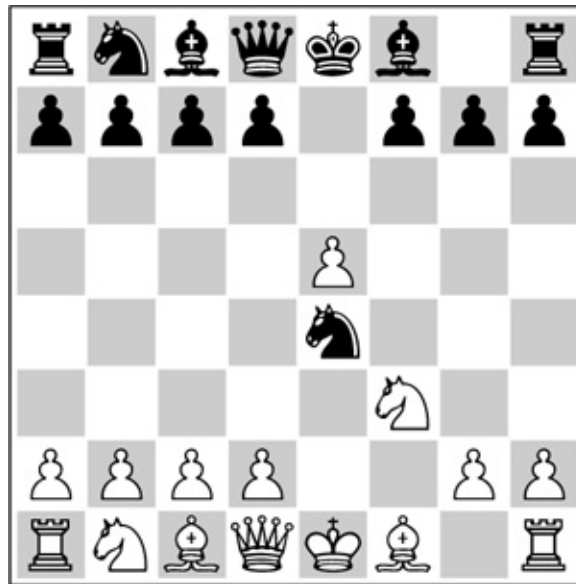
The crowning glory on a masterfully played game. With this final move White puts an end to Black's last hope (22.Qg5+?! f6 23.Nxf6 Qe5!). Now that he has the black player in a hold, the latter, understandably, 'taps out' (to maintain the analogy with the sport of judo).

## 20.4 Playing with the same piece twice

In the above we have learned that losing time in the opening should be avoided as much as possible. Morphy was one of the first players who applied the principle 'develop a new piece on every move' very consistently and straightforwardly. His crystal-clear play doesn't fail to impress even today. Not for nothing did Fischer dub him the greatest player of all time. One of the secrets of Morphy's play was that, while he was developing his own game, he managed to disorganize his opponent's play. Much later it was Nimzowitsch who concluded that some players sinned against the laws of the game. In the following example the black player really oversteps the bounds.

### The typical tempo gain 2

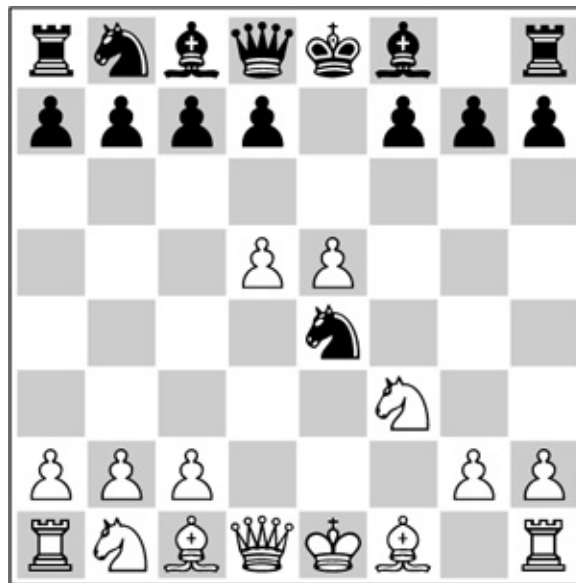
**1.e4 e5 2.f4 Nf6 3.fxe5 Nxe4 4.Nf3**



**4...Nc6?**

This looks like a good developing move, but in fact it is a blunder. Now the black knights will be hunted like wounded game.

**5.d3 Nc5 6.d4 Ne4 7.d5 Nb8**



And now, with a new attack on the Ne4, White can continue his development, while Black has no time to bring a new piece into the game himself White can play 8.Bd3, whereas 8.Nbd2 and 8.Qe2 Nc5 9.Nc3 are also interesting. Nimzowitsch calls this 'exchanging a *Tempo-gobbler*', with which he means the black knight on e4. With the disappearance of the *Tempo-user* for the 'newborn' knight on d2, all the tempi that the black knight has already gobbled up also

disappear.

Such a *Tempo-user* is not always a disadvantage. The English grandmaster Speelman has shown many times that in the position arising after **1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.g3**, the move **4...Nd4!?** is quite playable for Black. Even though Black moves the same piece twice, White can hardly take advantage of the time he has gained. This is because White has not chosen an aggressive set-up, which allows Black to permit himself a slight tempo loss.

This case proves that at the very moment you define a rule, you have immediately got hold of the exception. When Nimzowitsch wrote his book *My System*, he was agitating against Tarrasch's dogmas. With the help of the rules established by his predecessor, Nimzowitsch established his own axioms. He considered himself to be a rebel, but we could call many of his findings commonplace in our time. One of the 'Hypermoderns' of that time, Richard Réti, already pointed out several shortcomings in Nimzowitsch's ideas.

KP 9.4 (C46)

□ Réti, Richard

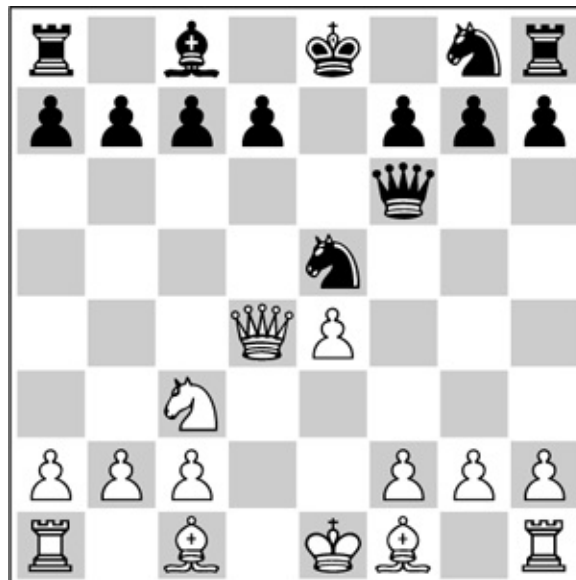
■ Dunkelblum, Arthur

Vienna 1914 (offhand)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Bc5?! 4.Nxe5! Nxe5 5.d4 Bxd4**

Not the best move. The white queen will be very dominant in the centre now.

**6.Qxd4 Qf6?**



Now things go from bad to worse. Black thinks he has made a good move, since



he is threatening 7...Nf3+, and as soon as White parries this threat, he hopes to continue with 8...Nc6, neutralizing White's advantage. Réti shows that he is not hampered by dogmatic thinking.

### **7.Nb5!**

The white player is ignoring the rule that you shouldn't play the same piece twice in the opening. After Black's last move White immediately aims at his target: the weakened pawn on c7. In passing, the queen is also protected, ruling out the threat of ...Nf3+. Black's reply is forced.

### **7...Kd8 8.Qc5!**

Again White shows that he is not hindered by 'mechanical' thinking. The text move is already the final blow for Black. The double threat of 9.Qxc7+ and 9.Qf8# cannot be prevented without material loss. Therefore, Black resigned. With justification, since his position is hopeless after 8...Nh6 9.Qxc7+ Ke7 10.Nc3!.

## **20.5 Converting a lead in development into other advantages**

You have to 'learn from the classics', as the saying goes. When studying chess, it can do no harm to study the classics from time to time. Especially games by Fischer are worth playing over. The study of the following game turned out to be very valuable for me.

EO 31.1 (A36)

□ **Smyslov,Vasily**

■ **Fischer,Robert**

Palma de Mallorca izt 1970 (2)

**1.c4 g6 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 c5 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.b3?!**

A suspicious plan, slightly neglecting the centre.

**5...e6**

Now that White is playing on the flank, Black aims at the centre.

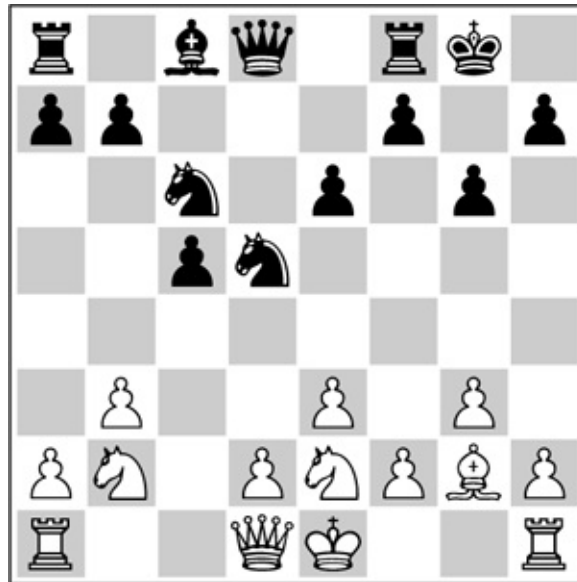
**6.Bb2 Nge7 7.Na4?!**

Smyslov would like to swap the dark-squared bishops, but he underestimates the fact that his queen's knight will be misplaced as a consequence.

**7...Bxb2 8.Nxb2 0-0 9.e3?!**

Again White loses time. Much better was the healthy developing move 9.Nf3.

**9...d5 10.cxd5 Nxd5 11.Ne2**



### **11...b6!**

A strong reply by Fischer. Now that White has weakened the d3-square with his ninth move, he aims for this square with his pieces. The intention of his last move is to try and take advantage of the d3 weakness with ...Nb4 and ...Ba6.

### **12.d4?!**

Perhaps White could have limited the damage with the modest 12.a3.

### **12...Ba6!**

Actively played! Black chooses to mobilize a different piece on every new move, and thereby exerts pressure on the vulnerable white centre.

### **13.dxc5 Qf6**

Not 13...bxc5, which would saddle Black with an ugly weakness on c5. With the text move he keeps White quite busy.

### **14.Nc4 Nc3**

The intention behind the previous move. White is given no time to breathe, and with this fierce action he is deprived of the right to castle.

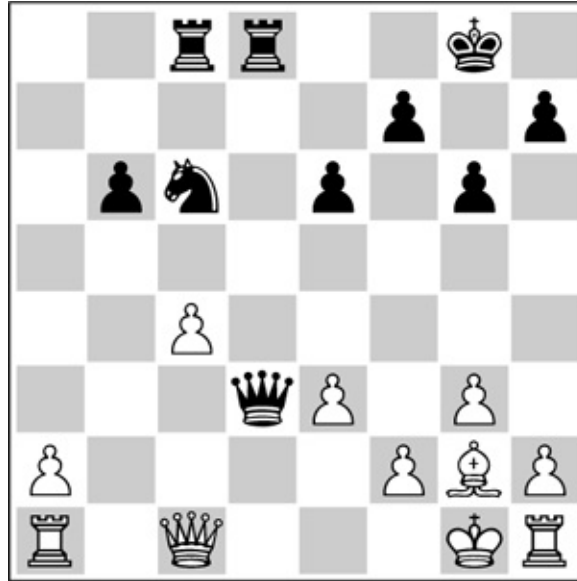
### **15.Nxc3**

After 15.Qc2 Nxe2 16.Kxe2 Rac8, White will be in even greater trouble than in the game.

### **15...Qxc3+16.Kf1**

Not to be recommended is 16.Nd2 in view of 16...Nb4!, and the white position collapses quickly. After the text move Black, at the cost of a pawn, brings all his pieces into play at high speed.

### **16...Rfd8 17.Qc1 Bxc4+ 18.bxc4 Qd3+ 19.Kg1 Rac8 20.cxb6 axb6**



Time to draw up the balance. Black has lost a pawn, but with his efficient piece play he has mobilized all his pieces. In the meantime, White has been forced to give up castling, as a result of which it is hard to bring the h1 rook into play. In practice, this means that in the centre and on the queenside White will be playing with a rook less for a long time.

### 21.Qb2

A logical move. White's queen leaves the c-file and he tries to activate his h1 rook by means of a march of his h-pawn.

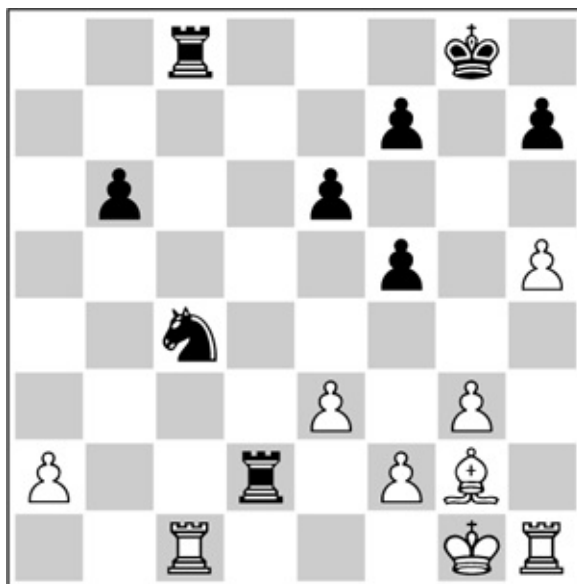
Another idea for White is 21.Bxc6 Rxc6 22.Kg2, in order, after 22...Rxc4, to continue with 23.Qd1 Qe4+ 24.Qf3 Qxf3+ 25.Kxf3 Rd2 26.Rhd1, and it looks as though White will escape with a draw.

However, Black has the stronger option of 22...Qe4+!. Now, 23.f3 is more or less forced, which amounts to an unpleasant weakening. After 23...Qd3 24.Rd1 (neither does 24.Qb2 Rxc4 bring any relief: 25.Rac1 Rxc1 26.Rxc1 Qxe3 27.Rc2 e5!, with good winning chances for Black) 24...Qe2+ 25.Kh3 Rdc8!, the future does not look bright for White.

### 21 ...Na5 22.h4 Nxc4 23.Qf6 Qf5!

Played without hesitation by Fischer, which illustrates how effective his way of thinking was. The queen is White's only active piece, so Fischer gladly exchanges it off. Because of White's passive pieces on the queenside, Black now converts his material disadvantage into an advantage.

### 24.Qxf5 gxf5 25.h5 Rd2 26.Rc1?



Activating the wrong rook. According to Soltis, 26.Rh4 Ne5 27.Rd4 Rb2 28.e4 would have given drawing chances.

**26...Rc5!**

Another extremely strong move. The knight is unpinned so it can be moved.

**27.Rh4 Ne5 28.Rxc5**

White is forced to allow his opponent this highly dangerous c-pawn. After 28.Rb1 Rcc2 29.Rxb6 Rxf2 30.Bb7 Rfe2, his position would collapse like a house of cards.

**28...bxc5 29.Ra4**

With great effort, Smyslov has finally managed to get his rook into play, but he has not been able to prevent Fischer from converting his lead in development into several other advantages. Besides the active rook and the well-placed knight, he has yet another undeniable trump card: the passed c-pawn, which will bring him victory!

**29...c4 30.h6 Kf8**

Black has to stay awake: White was threatening a back-rank mate!

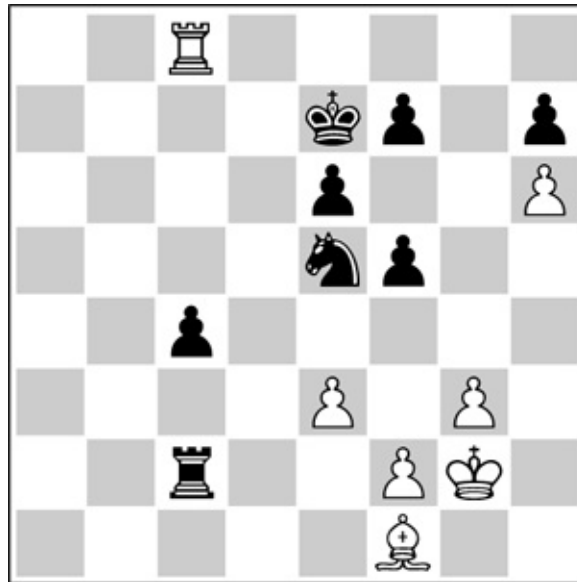
**31.Ra8+?!**

Relatively better was 31.Ra3, in order to impede the march of the pawn for a little longer.

**31...Ke7 32.Rc8**

There was no time for 32.a4 in view of 32...c3 33.Rc8 c2 34.Bf1 Nf3+ 35.Kg2 Ne1+, and the black passed pawn decides.

**32...Rxa2 33.BH Rc2 34.Kg2**



**34...Ng4!**

The simplest way to liquidate. Here we see another example of Fischer's flexible way of thinking. Black trades one advantage for another, and apparently he has no difficulty parting with his beautiful passed pawn.

By the way, 34...c3 35.Kg1 Ng4 36.Bd3 would have been similar.

**35.Kg1 Rxf2 36.Bxc4 Rf3**

In this way, Black picks up another pawn.

**37.Kg2 Rxe3 38.Rh8 Nxe6 39.Rxe7 Ng4 40.Bb5 Rb3 41.Bc6 Rb2+ 42.Kg1 Ne5 43.Ba8 Rb8!**

For the last time in this game Fischer demonstrates his fabulous technique. Now the white rook is exchanged by force, so he can finish the game 'with his eyes closed'.

White resigned, because after 43...Rb8 44.Bh1 Ng6 45.Kf2 Rh8 46.Rxe7 Nxe7, he is definitively counted out.

When I played over this game one more time, the principle applied by Fischer clearly appeared before my mind's eye. After White has lost the right to castle, draw an imaginary line through the middle of the board. On the queenside, Black is actually playing with an extra rook, and he takes advantage of this by exchanging as many pieces as possible on this wing. The fewer pieces there are left, the more White will feel his lack of defenders! I could not have imagined then that one time I would be able to bring this principle into practice in a nice manner myself

□ **Tolhuizen,Ludo**

■ **Grooten,Herman**

Eindhoven 1982

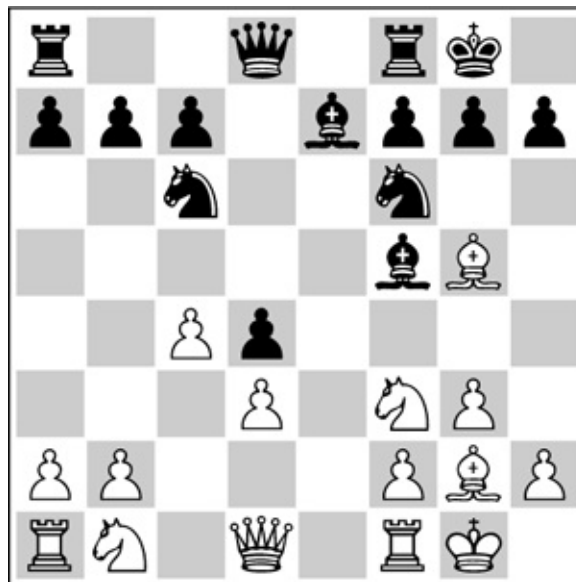
**1.g3 d5 2.Bg2 e5 3.d3 Nf6 4.c4 d4 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.0-0 Be7?!**

Black should have played 6...a5 first.

**7.e3?!**

White could have profited from Black's inaccuracy by immediately seizing the initiative here with 7.b4!, with the possible continuation 7...Bxb4 8.Nxe5 Nxe5 9.Qa4+.

**7...0-0 8.exd4 exd4 9.Bg5 Bf5**



**10.a3?!**

In this position, which has arisen from a Reversed Benoni, White still has to complete his development. White will later regret this 'innocent' little pawn move.

The logical way to play is 10.Na3, and then continue with 11.Nc2 followed by Ra1-b1, Qd1-d2, trying to carry through the b2-b4 push. In that event we should rate White's chances a little higher.

**10...a5 11.Re1 Re8 12.Qc2 Qd7**

Another interesting thought was 12...Nd7!?.



### 13.Ne5?

White is riding roughshod over the rule of thumb that tells us to ‘never move the same piece twice in the opening’.

There would still be not much of a problem if White had now played the developing move 13.Nbd2. After 13...h6 14.Bxf6 Bxf6 15.Rad1 (better than 15.Ne4?! Bxe4 16.Rxe4 Rxe4 17.dxe4 d3, and the passed pawn will yield Black the advantage) 15 ...Rad8, chances are balanced.

### 13...Nxe5 14.Rxe5



When this position appeared on the board, it called up an association with the game Smyslov-Fischer in my mind. What had the American done with his opponent? Hadn't he drawn an imaginary line through the middle? In my case,

White's inactive pieces are on the queenside, and the active ones are on the other side of the board. If Black now trades off the active white pieces, White is left with passive officers only. That goes to show what good it can do to have an exemplary game in the back of your head!

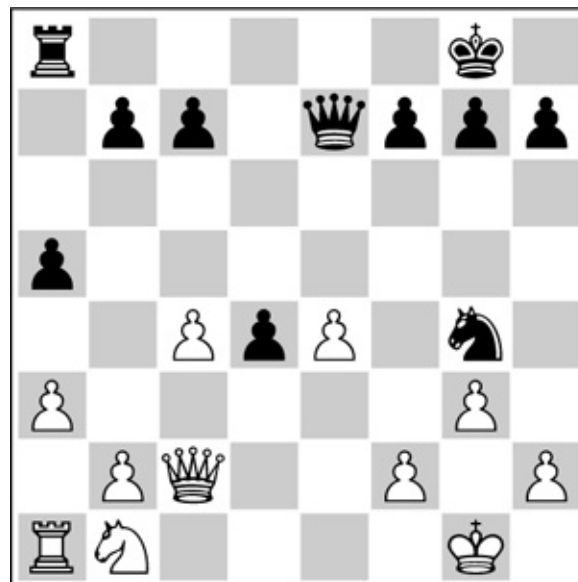
**14...Ng4! 15.Rxe7 Rxe7 16.Bxe7 Qxe7**

White now faces an unpleasant situation. He still cannot develop his knight (17.Nd2? Qe2!, winning a pawn), and at the same time Black is threatening 17...Qe1+, which would decide the issue immediately. The following move is more or less forced, but it plays right into Black's hands.

**17.Be4 Bxe4**

Black is allowed to exchange off even more active white pieces, which is exactly what he wants.

**18.dxe4**



One more move is what White needs to bring his position in order: the move Nb1-d2. Can Black keep his opponent occupied?

**18...Qf6!**

Yes, he can! 18...Qc5 would have served the same purpose.

**19.h3**

There is no reasonable alternative. 19.Nd2 is still out of the question, and 19.Qe2 is refuted by 19...d3 20.Qxg4 Qxb2, and Black wins. 19.f4 is no reasonable alternative either. After 19...d3 20.Qc3 Qe7 21.Qd2 (21.Qxd3 Qc5+, winning) 21...Qxe4, Black has won a crucial pawn.

**19...d3!**

This push has been hanging in the air, but it had to be calculated accurately. The following is forced.

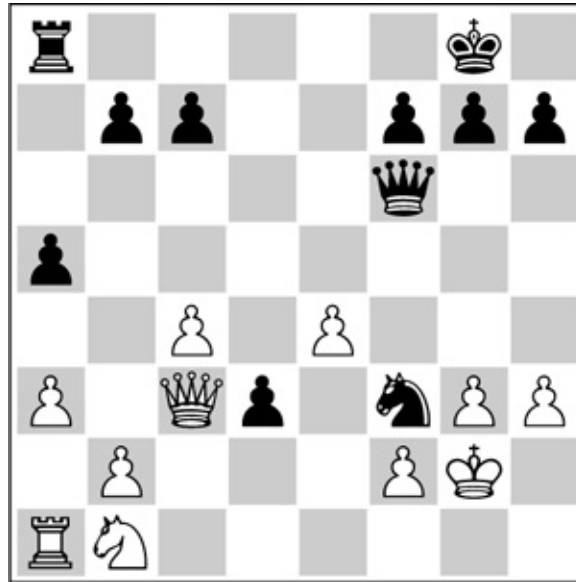


### 20.Qd2 Ne5 21.Qc3

Again White must have thought: now only Nb1-d2 and the worst will be behind me. But he is in for a nasty surprise...

Of course, 21.Kg2? wasn't possible on account of 21...Qf3+ 22.Kg1 Qxe4, and the knight check on f3 is devastating. On 21.Qc1, Black uses his lead in development to attack the black kingside: 21...h5! 22.Nd2 h4 23.Kg2 Ra6, and all Black's pieces are in the game.

### 21...Nf3+22.Kg2



### 22...d2!!

A nice way of forcing the passed pawn through.

### 23.Qxf6

There was no defence left. For example, 23.Qxf3? fails to 23...Qxf3+ 24.Kxf3 d1Q+; and 23.Nxd2? Qxc3 24.bxc3 Nxd2 costs White a piece.

### 23...Ne1+

With this intermediate check Black first brings his knight into safety, before proceeding to the order of the day.

### 24.Kh2 d1 Q

A peculiar transaction has taken place, and if we count, we see that on balance, Black has handed in a pawn. But his lead in development is the leading theme here. The white queen is under attack, and so White has to lose time again. With all this, Tolhuizen still doesn't manage to activate his two unfortunate pieces in the left corner.

### 25.Qc3

After 25.Qf5 Nc2, he would also have been forced to hand over lots of material.

### 25...Qe2

Afterwards, a few people asked me why I hadn't played 25...Nc2 here. Such materialists! Certainly, Black wins an exchange, but with such a surplus in activity Black can go for bigger game: the white king!

### 26.Kg1

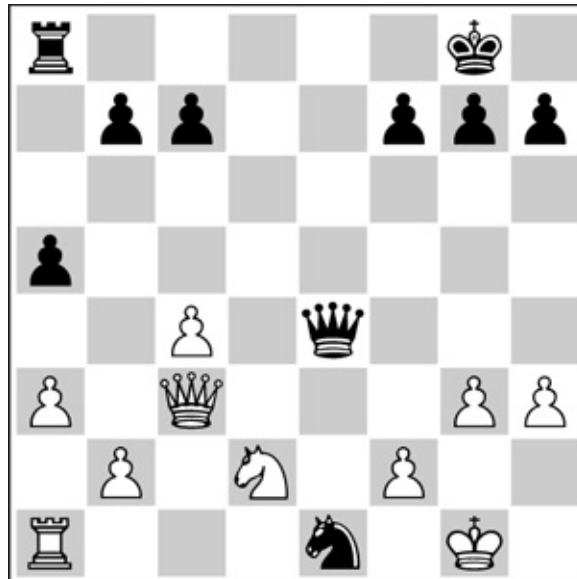
Clearly, White can prevent the threat of 26...Qf1+ only by giving up lots of material.

### 26...Qxe4

Since the white player hadn't succeeded in carrying out the following move in the entire game, he now took hold of his knight on b1. And as he put it on the d2-square he told me: 'I've been trying to play this move all the time and since I haven't succeeded, I will do it now.' With this sporting gesture Tolhuizen allowed me the honour to crown my work.

### 27.Nd2

Also after 27.Kf1 Re8, the curtain falls.

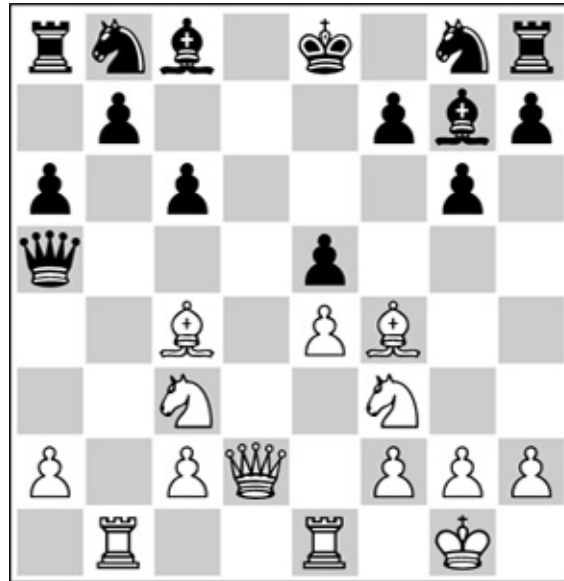


### 27...Qg2

Mate.

## Exercises

20.1



White has brought all his pieces into play, whereas Black has developed only two. Therefore it is no surprise that the position contains a combination. Do you see which one?

[Solution](#)

20.2



Black has just played **8...Nd4xb5** instead of the safe **8... 0-0**. How did White punish this knight move?

[Solution](#)

20.3



White has mobilized virtually all his pieces, whereas a few of Black's pieces are not yet in play. So it is time for White to strike hard. Give a convincing variation.

[Solution](#)

20.4



White has invested an exchange for a great surplus in activity. As long as the rook on h8 cannot be brought into play, Black has serious problems. How can White continue powerfully?

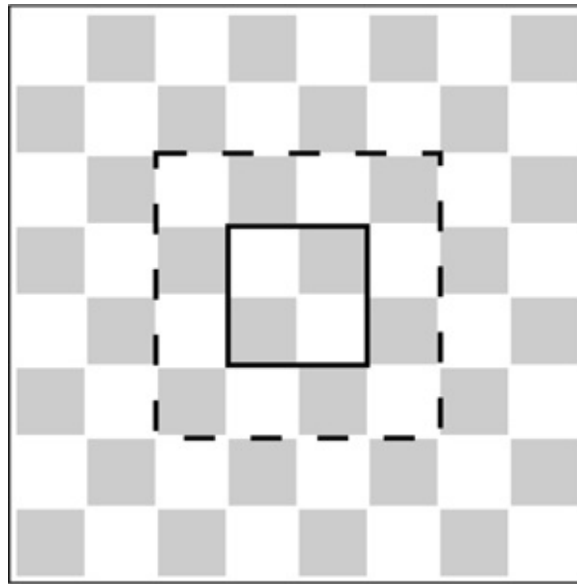
[Solution](#)

## Chapter 21

# Centralization

### 21.1 Introduction

We have stated earlier that the centre plays an important role in chess. From the first move there is a struggle for the control of the central squares.



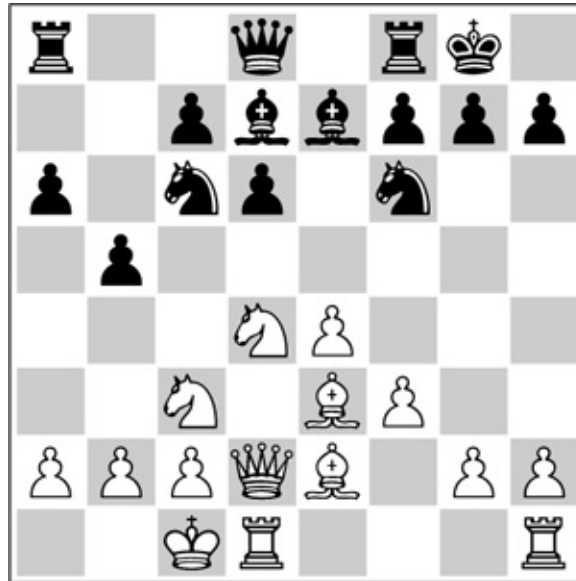
When we talk about the centre, we mean the squares d4, d5, e4 and e5. The squares around these: c3, c4, c5, c6, d6, e6, f6, f5, f4, f3, e3 and d3, are often just as important. In Chapter 11, we have already seen that a pawn centre has special significance. Pawns standing side by side in the centre constitute a force that is sometime capable of rolling forward irresistibly, if nothing is put in their way. Nimzowitsch emphatically brought the importance of the centre to our attention. A strong central position can be the justification for an attack on the flank, he claimed. The Teacher emphasized the importance of a stable position in the centre as a requirement for a flank attack. He also showed that the opposite is true as well. A sharp flank attack can be disrupted by a counterthrust in the centre. In *My System*, Nimzowitsch gives an example from his own practice.

□ Nimzowitsch, Aaron

■ NN

Riga 1910

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 d6 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.Be2 Be7 7.Be3 Bd7  
8.Qd2 a6 9.f3 0-0 10.0-0-0 b5?!



Black considers that the moment has come to start a flank attack. In this case he has no strong centre position, and because of this, his action quickly falls through.

**11.Nd5!**

The flank attack is met by a central action, which disrupts Black's play. Black's intentions will come to nothing.

**11...Nxd5 12.exd5**

Slightly more accurate was 12.Nxc6 Bxc6 13.exd5 Bd7, since White can wait a while before deciding if he wants to continue with Be3-d4 or not.

**12...Nxd4 13.Bxd4**

Thus, not only have Black's most important potential attacking pieces disappeared, but Black also has to contend with a substantial lack of space, as well as weak squares on the queenside. So his unjustified flank attack has completely backfired. White has a pleasant little plus.

**13...Bf6 14.f4 Re8 15.Bf3**

The strongly centralized position of Whites pieces makes it hard for Black to find counterplay. Moreover, his weaknesses on the queenside may turn against him now According to Nimzowitsch, it is now the white player who is running



the show.

If you know the principle, it is not so hard to apply it in your own games.

□ **Bolzoni, Victor Angel**

■ **Grooten, Herman**

Antwerp 1996 (8)



White has treated the opening a little peculiarly, and now he thinks he can permit himself an action on the flank as well. Since Black has just played ...g6 (so as to keep the knight from f5), White thinks that he now has the target he needs.

**1.h4?!**

This is an unjustified action, especially since White is not fully developed yet. His king is still in the centre, and his pieces are far from harmoniously placed.

Necessary was 1.a3.

Black does not waste any time now, and makes his way through the centre.

**1...b4 2.Nd1d5! 3.h5**

We must grant the white player that he does continue consistently on his wrongly chosen path.

**3...dxe4 4.fxe4 Nc5**

Black contents himself with a favourable endgame, because the pawn on e4 can hardly be protected anymore. An attractive alternative was 4...Qa5, with which Black prepares ...Nc5 as well as ...0-0-0.

**5.Bxc5?!**

This exchange is a huge concession. White gives up the dark squares ‘for free’,

which makes him even more vulnerable than he already was.

**5...Bxc5 6.Qf3 Qb6 7.Bd3**

More active was 7.Bc4.

**7...0-0-0**

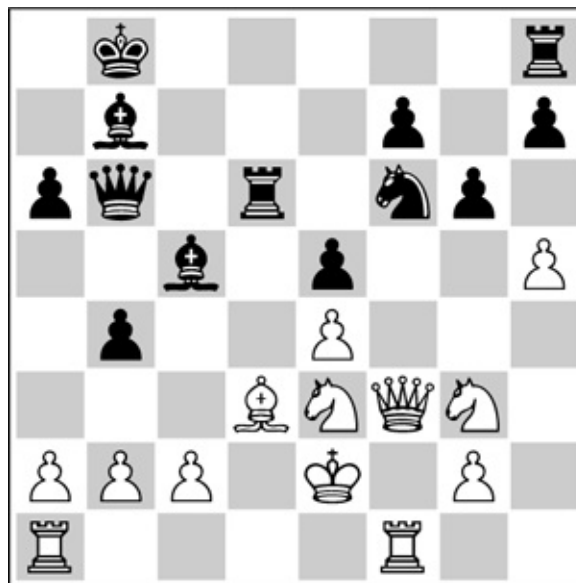
Now Black is fully developed, and all his pieces are actively placed. For his part, White has problems with his king, which still remains in the danger zone.

Another, related problem is that his a1 rook is doing nothing. The flank action h3-h4-h5, on which White had put so much of his hopes, has come to nothing.

**8.Rf1 Rd6 9.Ke2**

9.Nf2 is strongly met by 9...Qa5, preventing White from castling.

**9...Kb8 10.Ne3**



**10...Bc8!**

Now that the bishop has no employment on the a8-h1 diagonal for the moment, Black seeks work on the weakened white kingside. Here we can see another drawback of the h3-h4 thrust: the square g4 has become an annoying weakness.

**11.Nc4**

This does not help, but what else could we advise White here?

**11...Qc7 12.Nxd6 Bg4**

This way Black wins a decisive amount of material.

**13.Qxg4 Nxg4 14.Nxf7 Rf8 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.Ng5 Bf2 17.Nh1 Qb6 18.Nh3 Qe3+ 19.Kd1 Rf6 20.a4**

The possibility of 20.Nlxf2 Rxf2 21.Nxf2 Nxf2+ 22.Rxf2 Qxf2 yields a position that is technically winning for Black.

**20...Bh4 21.Rg1 Bg5**

In this chapter we will concentrate on two aspects of play in the centre:

## **21.2 Piece activity in the centre**

### **21.3 Pressure exerted on the centre by pieces**

## **21.2 Piece activity in the centre**

In the early 1990s I was invited a few times to take part in the Aegon tournament in The Hague, where humans pitted their strength against computers (see also Chapter 6). We know by now that computer technology has made enormous progress, which can be observed with the current chess playing programs. In those days, we could still speak of an interesting contest.

Since the Man versus Machine tournament had a pleasant atmosphere, there was an interesting exchange of ideas between chess players and programmers. This was one of those rare occasions where you were allowed to talk during the game, a chance which was seized with both hands by both sides. When it is the computer's move, the temptation to start a conversation with the operator is great. Both sides can profit from such conversations. The remarks of a strong chess player can be interesting for the programmer. On the other hand, information about the structure of chess programs can also be of use for the human player.

I pricked up my ears when I heard about the experiment that two amateur programmers had conducted with their program. They had employed the 'monster' to automatically play through a great number of grandmaster games. During this process, the computer had to record statistically how many squares in the enemy position were controlled by the winning side, especially in games by strong players. Attention was mainly turned towards the control of squares on the sixth, seventh and eighth (resp. third, second and first) ranks. Besides this, the programmers also recorded to what extent pieces controlled the centre. It will be no surprise that there turned out to be a relation between the number of squares under control in the enemy camp and the result of the game. The player with the greater control in the enemy camp emerged triumphant in many cases. Centrally placed pieces will almost always control more squares in the enemy ranks than pieces that are not centrally placed. Since it is perfectly logical that from the centre, pieces can be easily employed all over the board, both programmers took this information into account when they wrote their chess program. In order to evaluate an arbitrary position as well as possible, the programmers awarded bonus points to pieces that were centrally placed or aimed at the centre. It is elementary knowledge that a piece (with the exception of the rook!) possesses more mobility on a central square than on a square at the edge of the board. This may sound logical, but in practice it turns out to be difficult.

Many players neglect their central strategy in practice.

In the following game we see how Yusupov applies the principle of piece centralization consistently, whereas his opponent commits a few errors in this area.

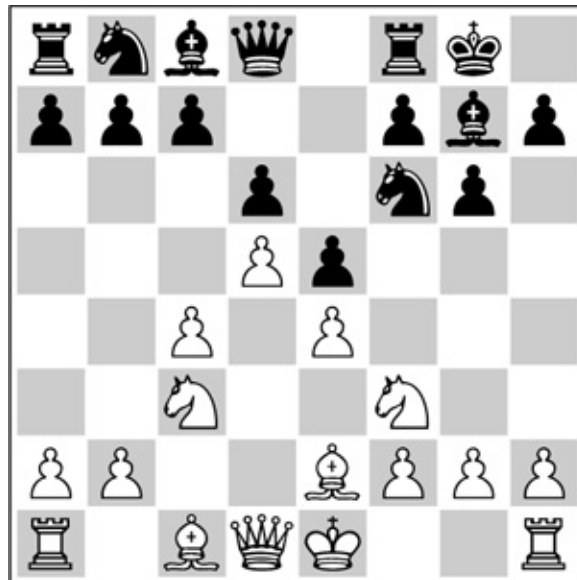
KI 12.5 (E93)

□ **Yusupov, Artur**

■ **Romanishin, Oleg**

Moscow ch-URS 1983 (13)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d6 3.c4 g6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.e4 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.d5**



**7...Nbd7?!**

This knight move is not frequently played in grandmaster practice anymore. More often, 7...a5 followed by ...Na6 is preferred. It is best for the knight to remain on a6 for as long as possible; it protects the pawn on c7 and hampers the b2-b4 and c4-c5 pushes for the time being.

**8.0-0 Nc5 9.Qc2 a5 10.Bg5 b6**

Nowadays we know that Black should first put the question to the bishop with 10...h6.

**11.Nd2 Qe8 12.Nb5 Na6 13.a3 h6**



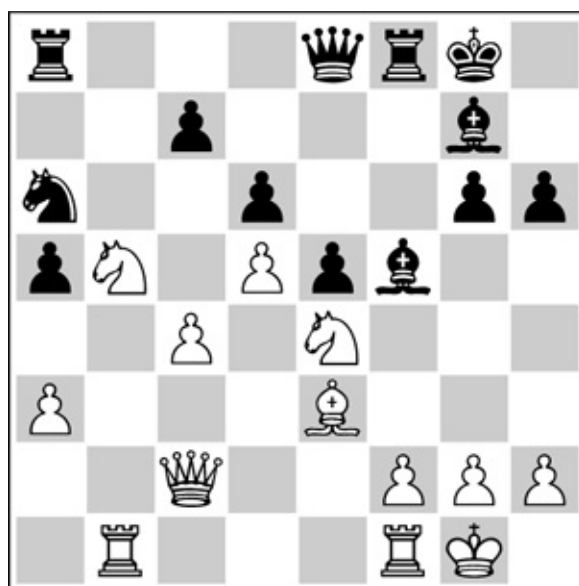
### 14.Be3!

Now the bishop does not have to return to h4. On e3 it is ideally posted.

**14...Ng4 15.Bxg4 Bxg4 16.b4 Bd7 17.bxa5 bxa5 18.Rab1 f5 19.exf5 Bxf5**

Capturing with the bishop surrenders the important central square e4, but 19... gxf5 also has its drawbacks. White can continue with 20.f3 or 20.f4, and in both cases he will have the upper hand.

### 20.Ne4



The knight settles on this beautiful central square and it does not plan to leave it any time soon.

**20...g5 21.f3 Bh7 22.h3 Qd7 23.Nbc3**

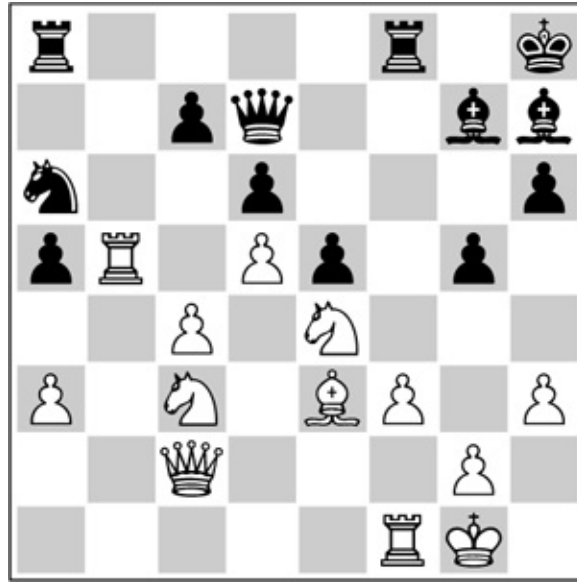
White strengthens the position of his knight and prepares the doubling of his

rooks on the b-file.

### **23...Kh8**

Black is not able to do anything against the threat. For example, 23...Rib8 does not bring any relief after 24.Rb5! Rxb5 25.cxb5 Nb8 26.a4, and both the backward pawn on c7 and the weak brother on a5 have become targets.

### **24.R65**



### **24...c6**

Black settles for the loss of a pawn, as also after 24...Nb8 25.Rb7 White can choose how he wants to win material.

### **25.dxc6**

With hindsight, 25.Rb6 would have been even stronger. After 25...cxd5 26.Nxd5, White exerts enormous pressure with his marvellously centralized pieces.

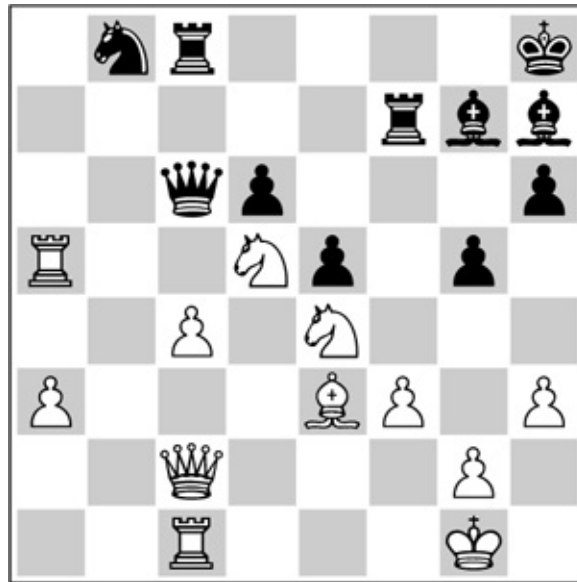
### **25...Qxc6 26.Nd5**

A useful alternative was 26.Qd3 Rfc8 27.Qxd6 Qxc4 28.Rxa5, and also here, Black is reduced to a mere onlooker, while White further increases his advantage.

### **26...Rac8**

Now 26...Nc7? fails to 27.Rb6 Qd7 28.Rb7, while 27...Bxe4 is no solution either after 28.Qxe4 Qd7 29.Rb7 Rac8 30.Bb6. In both cases White wins material.

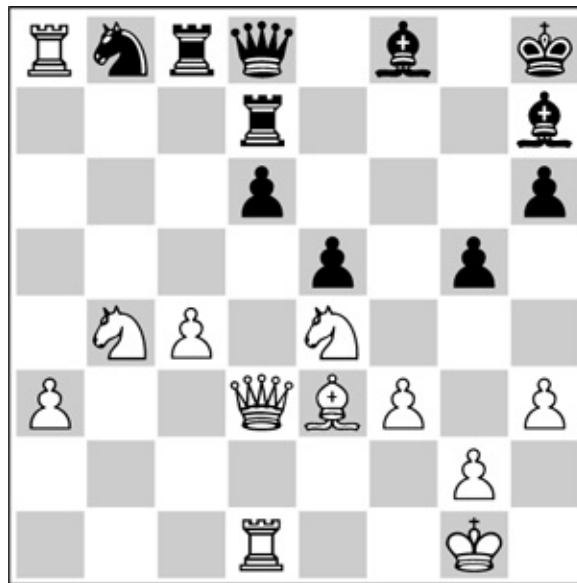
### **27.Rxa5 Nb8 28.Rc1 Rf7**



### 29.Qd3!

A beautiful example of centralization. The queen leaves the vulnerable c-file and indirectly aims once more at the d6 pawn. At the same time it keeps the squares e4 and d5 under control.

**29...Bf8 30.Nb4 Qe8 31.Ra8 Qd8 32.Rd1 Rd7**



### 33.Nd5!

Again Yusupov applies the principle of centralization. Black has immense trouble keeping his position together. By putting the knight on d5, White causes panic in the black camp. First of all, he threatens 34.Nb6.

**33...Rb7 34.a4**

White sets his extra a-pawn in motion.

**34...Nd7 35.Rxc8 Qxc8 36.a5**

And in no time this pawn has become a tremendous trump card.

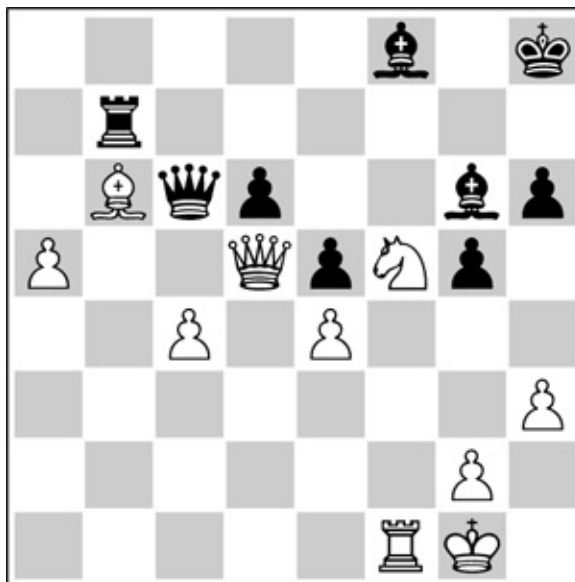
**36...Qc6 37.Nb6 Nf6 38.Nd5 Nxe4?!**

A little curious. Clearly Black should have preferred to repeat moves with 38...Nd7, to see how White is planning to make progress. Logical continuations are 39.Ra1 – to push the a-pawn – or 39.Qe2, to move the queen out of the pin and prevent the black rook from penetrating on the second rank.

**39.fxe4 Qa4 40.Rf1 Bg7 41.Bb6 Bg6 42.Ne3**

The knight leaves its central post in order to occupy another beautiful square: f5. At the same time the knight clears the way for the queen, which gladly takes over the central role.

**42...Qc6 43.Nf5 Bf8 44.Qd5!**



In turn, the queen occupies a dominant position on the square d5. From here it is eyeing the king, as well as the queenside.

**44...Qd7 45.c5!**

Now that Black is completely deadlocked, White decides to liquidate to a winning endgame.

**45...dxc5 46.Qxd7**

And Black resigned. After 46...Rxd7 47.a6, the a-pawn cannot be stopped by normal means.

### **21.3 Central activity by pieces in the endgame**

In the endgame, pieces should also be centralized. Just as in the middlegame, the pieces can intervene quickly on the wings if they are standing in the centre.

There is one aspect in which the treatment of the endgame differs materially

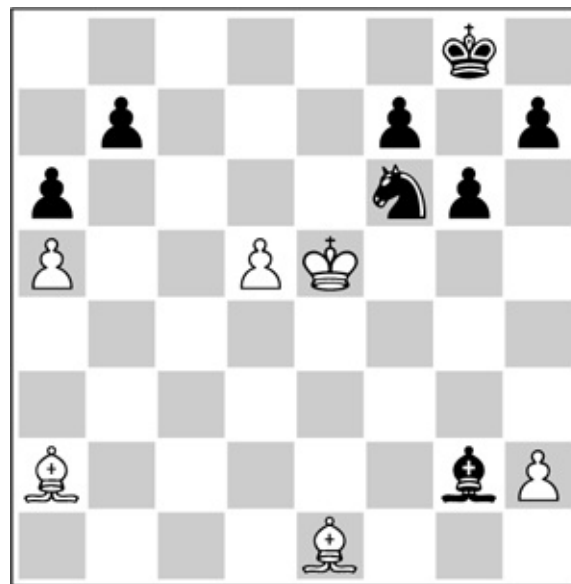


from that of the middlegame: the activity of the king. As a rule, in the middlegame the king will be put in as safe a place as possible, whereas in the endgame it can very well be involved in the struggle. When Donner beat the Yugoslav Velimirovic in the game below he provided the move Kd4-e5 in his analysis with the following comment:

□ **Donner, Jan Hein**

■ **Velimirovic, Dragoljub**

Havana 1971 (3)



The king breaks through and the fighting-power of a king mounting the attack from behind the enemy pawns to my mind equals that of a full rook.'

This remark shows the importance a good grandmaster assigns to an active involvement of the king in the endgame.

In the following game we see how Réti neatly puts his pieces in the centre. Despite far-reaching simplifications, he maintains his influence in the centre, so as to reap the harvest with his centralized king in the far endgame.

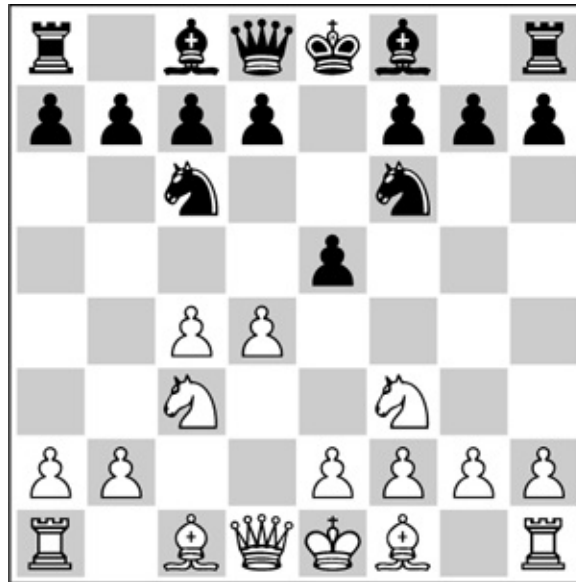
EO 8.6 (A28)

□ **Réti, Richard**

■ **Bohatirchuk, Fedor**

Moscow 1925 (18)

**1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.d4**



#### 4...exd4

‘Surrender of the centre’, as we read in Nimzowitsch’s *My System*, in cases where such an exchange takes place. Black gives his opponent free hand in the centre by acquiescing to this unfavourable exchange. Still, as Nimzowitsch himself also played such positions, he may have used the term ironically to mock Tarrasch’s use of the same phrase.

#### 5.Nxd4 Bb4 6.g3 Ne5 7.Qa4 Bc5?!

Much better is 7...Bxc3+, ruining the white pawn formation in exchange for giving up the bishop pair.

#### 8.Be3 Bxd4

Now Black has to give up his bishop in far less favourable circumstances.

#### 9.Bxd4 Qe7 10.Bg2



### **10...0-0?!**

After this less than energetic continuation, Black hardly has any compensation for the concessions he has made in the opening. Probably Black had set his sights on 10...Nd3+, but possibly by now he concluded that after 11.Kf1 the option 11...Nxb2? fails to 12.Qb3. Still, he should have opted for the knight check. Although White is also better after 11...Nc5 12.Qc2, he does have to solve the problem of his king.

### **11.0-0 d6 12.Rfd1 c5**

With this pawn move Black commits an ugly weakening of the square d5.

### **13.Bxe5**

Judging by today's standards of positional play, White would have done better to keep the bishop pair with 13.Be3. With the text move he gives up the bishop pair without a fight, and he solves Black's backward pawn on d6 as well. However, what Réti does is principled: he wants to make optimal use of the d5-square without losing any time.

### **13...dxe5 14.Nd5**

Also possible was 14.Rd2, in order first to increase the pressure along the d-file.

### **14...Nxd5 15.Bxd5 e4**

Not an attractive pawn move, but it was more or less necessary, since otherwise White would be able to play e2-e4 sooner or later, after which the bishop on d5 would be the unassailable showpiece of his position.

### **16.Qb3!**

The queen must be centralized. It strives for the square e3 and parries, en passant, Black's possibly annoying ...e4-e3.

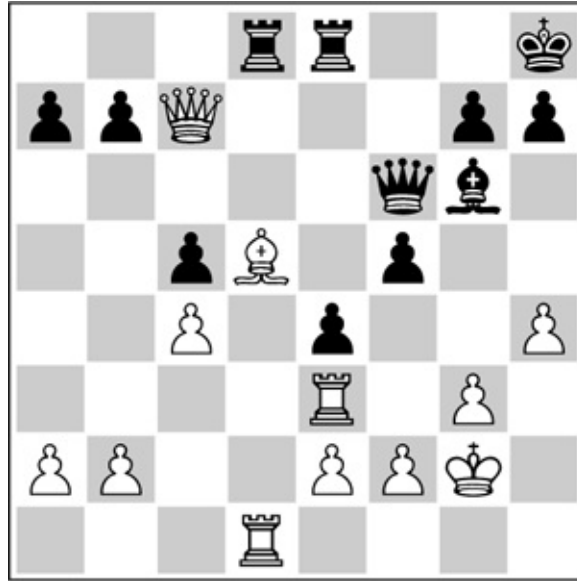
### **16...Rb8 17.Qe3 Bf5 18.Qf4 Bg6 19.Rac1 Rfe8 20.Rc3**

Again – centralization. The pawn on e4 is a target, since it is on the wrong colour for Black.

### **20...Kh8 21.Re3f5**

Black is forced to make a new concession.

### **22.h4 Rbd8 23.Kg2 Qf6 24.Qc7?!**



A curious move which, however, does not spoil anything. Réti should have preferred the immediate 24.Rd2, as now he unnecessarily hands Black an extra possibility.

**24...Qe7?!**

Black could have gone for the sharp 24...Qxb2, with the following forced sequence: 25.Rb3 Qxe2 26.Rxb7 Qf3+ 27.Kh3! Qc3 28.Qxc5, and now Black will be in full contention in this sharp hand-to-hand fight after 28...f4!.

No relief is offered by 28...a5, as White replies 29.Qe3!, and the white c-pawn is very strong in combination with the strong bishop on d5.

28...e3 looks like a dangerous attempt at counterplay. After 29.fxe3 Rxe3 30.Bf3! Rde8 31.Rb3, however, White gains the advantage.

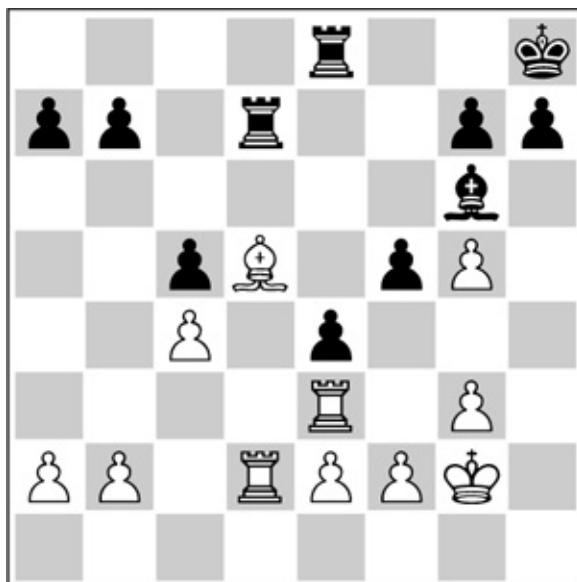
**25.Qf4**

More in keeping with the spirit of the position was 25.Qxe7 Rxe7 26.B Bf7 (26...exf3+ 27.Bxf3! Red7 28.Rd5, and his centralized pieces give White the advantage) 27.g4 fxg4 28.fxe4, and here also, White has firm control of the centre.

**25...Qf6 26.Qc7 Qe7 27.Qf4 Qf6 28.Rd2!**

After some hesitation, Réti now decides to play for a win after all.

**28...Rd7 29.Qg5! Qxg5 30.hxg5**



In this position, Black is in trouble because of the pressure that the white pieces exert on the black position from the centre. White's bishop is still very dominant on d5, and White has the possibility to attack the enemy pawn structure with both f2-f3 and, eventually, g3-g4. Furthermore, it is important that the black king is cut off from the battlefield for the time being, whereas its white colleague will shortly make its presence felt in the centre.

**30...Red8 31.f3 Re7?**

With this mistake Black jumps from the frying pan into the fire. The pin along the e-file is unpleasant, as we shall see. Better was 31...exf3+, although after 32.exf3 Bf7 33.Re5 g6 White would have built up a super-central position!

**32.Rd1 Bf7**

Understandably, Black wants to do something about the strong white bishop, but this visibly worsens his position.

**33.g4!**

Otherwise this would not have been possible, since with the bishop on g6 Black would have had the reply ...f5-f4.

**33...g6 34.Kg3 Rf8 35.Kf4!**

Réti knows no fear. Who would put his king on the same file as an enemy rook? However, White's intention is to centralize the king, in view of the approaching endgame. At the same time he rules out a tactical finesse: ...Bxd5 followed by ...f5-f4+.

There is not a single tactic with which Black can exploit the vis-N-vis of his rook with the white king.

**35...b6**

Bohatirchuk takes a modest stance with this waiting move. Attempts to become

active would run up against a cunning white reaction, as the following variations show:

A) 35...fxg4 36.Kxg4 Bxd5 37.cxd5 Rd8 38.Rxe4, and White wins;

B) 35...Be6 36.Bxe6 Rxe6 37.gxf5! Rxf5+ (37...gxf5 38.Rd7 is already virtually decisive) 38.Kg4 Rf7 39.Rxe4 Rxe4+ 40.fxe4, and the passed e-pawn will decide the issue.

**36.gxf5 gxf5 37.Bxf7 Rxf7 38.Rd5**

Still better was 38.Rd6.

**38...Re7 39.Re5!**

It is interesting to see how Réti manages to increase his undeniable advantage step by step. The exchange of one pair of rooks favours him.

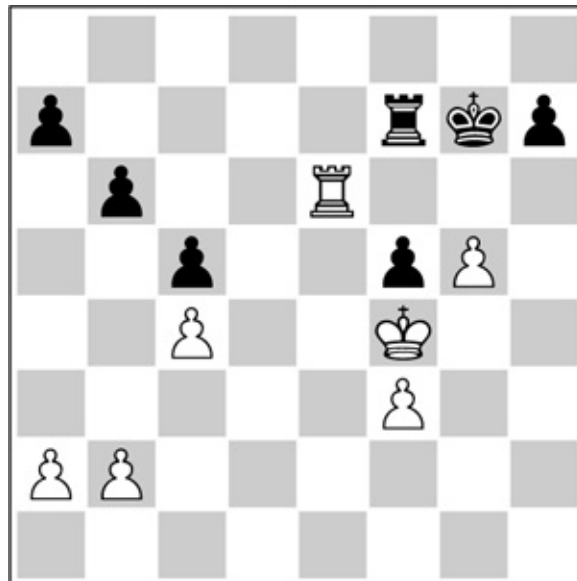
**39...Rxe5**

Black has to swap, as after 39...Ref7 40.fxe4 fxe4+ 41.Kxe4 Rf4+ 42.Kd3 Rd8+ 43.Kc3, White has a healthy extra pawn.

**40.Kxe5 exf3 41.exf3 Kg7 42.Kf4 Rf7 43.Re5 Kg6?!**

Slightly more tenacious was 43...h6 44.Rxf5 Re7.

**44.Re6+ Kg7**



**45.b3!**

Zugzwang! Black must let go of the f-pawn.

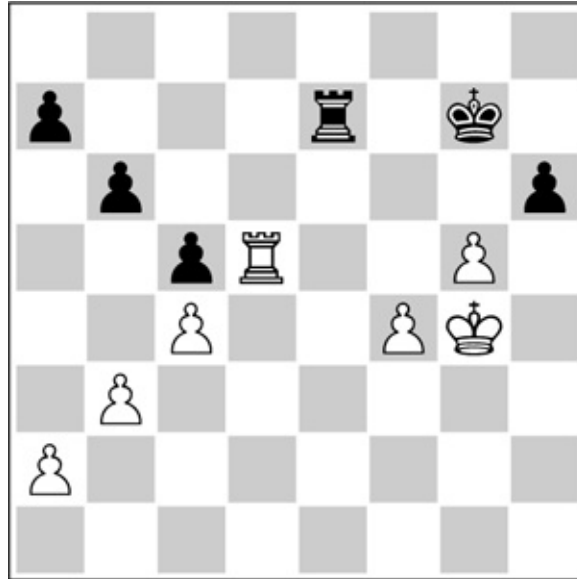
**45...Kg8**

The attempt to become active with 45...Rd7 is doomed to failure after 46.Kxf5 Rd2 47.Re7+ Kg8 48.Rxa7.

**46.Re5 Kg7 47.Rxf5 Rd7 48.Rd5**

Preventing any possible counterplay.

**48...Rf7+ 49.Kg4 h6 50.f4 Re7**



**51.f5!**

This forces the decision. Black has no counterplay whatsoever, while the f-pawn is marching on irresistibly. The rest is no problem at all for Réti.

**51...hxd5 52.Kxd5 Rf7 53.Rd6 Rc7 54.Rg6+ Kf8 55.f6 Rd7 56.Rh6 Rd2 57.Rh8+ Kf7 58.Rh7+ Ke6 59.Re7+ Kd6 60.Rxa7 Rg2+ 61.Kf5 Kc6 62.f7 Rf2+ 63.Ke6**

**1-0**

## **21.4 Piece pressure on the centre from a distance**

So far we have exclusively looked at examples where the pieces were in the centre and were deployed from there to perform a certain task elsewhere on the board. Sometimes pieces do not have to be in the centre to fulfil such functions. We know by now that some pieces work better from a distance. A bishop on a long diagonal is better when it exerts its influence on the central squares from a distance.

In the 1920's, Réti was a player who had a clear preference for fianchettoing his bishops. He opined that in the opening it is not necessary to occupy the centre with pawns immediately. 'The pieces can do a good job exerting this control just as well', his philosophy went. We give you the following model performance by Réti.

□ **Réti, Richard**

■ **Capablanca, José**

New York 1924 (5)



White has a little more space and his pieces can be deployed more easily than Black's.

**1...cxd4?!**

Black releases the tension in the centre, which is a signal that he does not like the position one bit. A neutral move like 1...Rad8 or 1...Re7 looked better.

**2.Bxd4 Qxc4**

This was Black's intention, but he has assessed the consequences of the liquidation wrongly.

**3.Bxg7 Kxg7 4.Qb2+ Kg8 5.Rxd6**

White has his pawn back and he has made considerable progress. Especially his major pieces are significantly better placed than Black's. The latter's queen is vulnerable, while his rooks are also hardly functional.

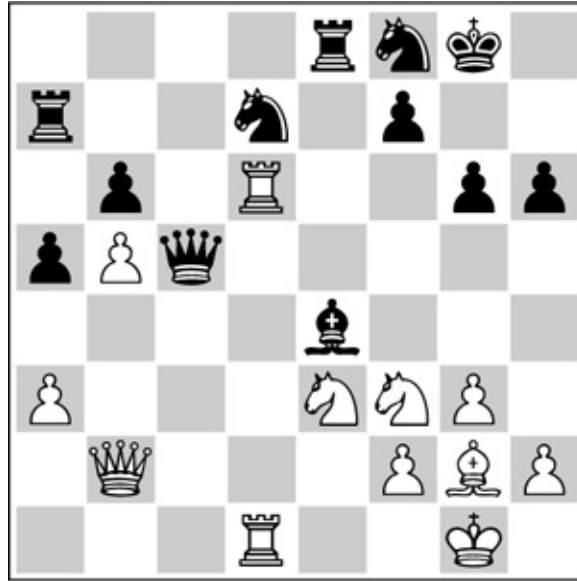
**5...Qc5?!**

After the modest 5...Qc7 6.Rad1 Rad8 7.Qd4 Bb7, the black position still seems defensible, although after, for instance, 8.Qf4, White would also have good prospects.

**6.Rad1 Ra7 7.Ne3!**

Réti brings a new piece into the game. The knight threatens to be deployed against the enemy king via g4.





### 7...Qh5

Not a pleasant move to make. Apparently, Capablanca doesn't find a satisfactory solution for the problem he is confronted with, and therefore he decentralizes his queen. There were several alternatives to deal with the threat of Ne3-g4:

A) 7...h5 is relatively best, but this means yet another weakening of his already damaged king position. After this move, 8.h4!?, preparing Nf3-g5, looks like a good possibility for White;

B) 7...Re6?! looks logical. Black wants to force the intruder on d6 to declare its intentions and at the same time he tries to give extra protection to the weak square f6. Unfortunately for him, there is a snake in the grass: 8.Rxe6 Nxe6 9.Ng4!, and White wins at least a pawn. For example, 9...Kh7?? fails to 10.Rxd7 Rxd7 11.Nf6+ and White wins a piece;

C) 7...Bxf3?! is a rather radical solution, with the intention of having the black knight join the fight after 8.Bxf3 Ne5. After 9.Bc6!, however, Black's problems have only increased.

### 8.Nd4!?

Merrily continuing his centralization policy. The knight strives for the strong square c6. Réti could have crowned his centralization strategy more radically with 8.R1d5!. The intention is to cut off the queen, as after 8...Bxd5 9.g4 the queen is trapped!

### 8...Bxg2 9.Kxg2 Qe5

Capablanca cannot move a muscle. He can hardly improve the positions of his pieces. The knights are tied to their squares, which also prevents Black from involving his rooks in the struggle. Here we see another example of the 'lack of harmony' that we dealt with in Chapter 19. The only piece that Black can move

is the queen.

It would not have been so unwise to sacrifice an exchange. With 9...Rxe3 10.fxe3 Ne5 Black could have put up a defensive wall, which is not easy to breach.

### 10.Nc4

Disorganizing the black game even more.

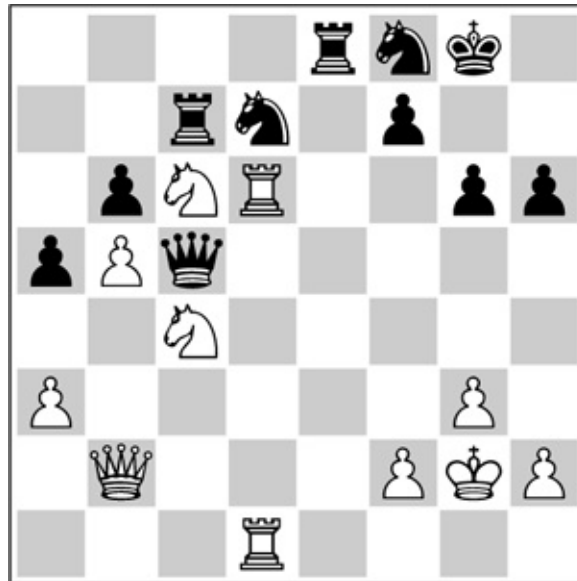
### 10...Qc5

Here the queen is very exposed, but 10...Qe4+ was no solution in view of 11.f3 Qb7 12.Nc6 Raa8 13.Qd2!, and White strikes home.

### 11.Nc6

Réti has a tough choice between many good options. After 11.Rc6 Qh5 12.Rd2, Black is more or less forced to play 12...Rb8, after which his efforts are becoming pathetic.

### 11...Rc7

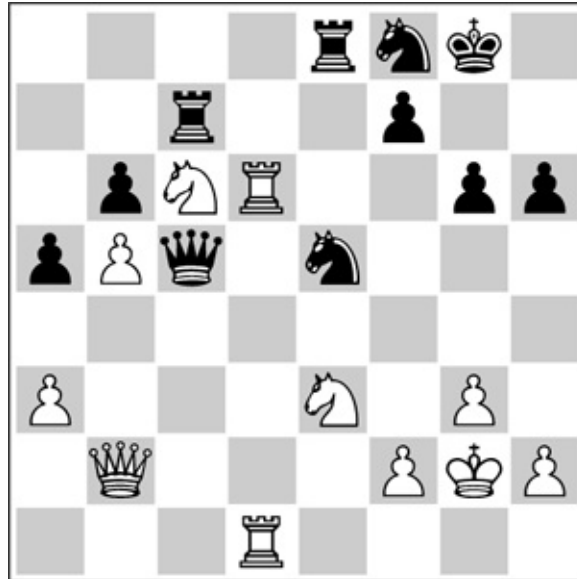


### 12.Ne3!?

Knights need foot holds. Here we can see that both white knights have found a foothold in an entirely open position. It is a pity that Réti loses his sense of the aesthetic here. Not only optically very pretty, but actually also by far the best move was the super-centralization 12.R1d4!.. After, for example, 12...Qf5 13.Ne3, 13...Rxe3 is more or less forced, but also here any salvation is far off for Black.

### 12...Ne5?!

An act of despair. Now White has several ways to end the game. If he had wanted to prolong the struggle, Capablanca would have had to make use of another exchange sacrifice: 12...Rxe3 13.fxe3 Qxe3. True, he would have



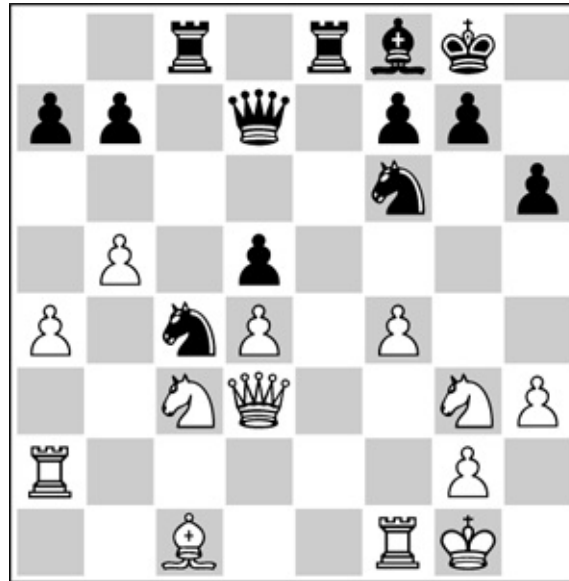
And here Black gave up. There could have followed: 13...Nc4 14.Rxc5 Nxb2 15.Rc2, and since both Rxb2 and Nd5 followed by Nf6+ are threatened, Black has to give material with 15...Rxe3 16.fxe3 Na4, and now it is definitely over after 17.Rc4 Nc5 18.Nxa5.

More in style and, again, more aesthetic would have been 13.Qa1!, when the threat of 14.R1d5 cannot be met by normal means anymore: 13...Nc4 14.Ng4, and it is all over.

More in style and, again, more aesthetic would have been 13.Qa1!, when the threat of 14.R1d5 cannot be met by normal means anymore: 13...Nc4 14.Ng4, and it is all over.

## Exercises

## 21.1



What does Black play in order to increase his influence on the centre?

### Solution

21.2



How does White make optimal use of his centralized position?

[Solution](#)

21.3



The black pieces seem to be lacking in coordination. By what means can White try to exploit this?

[Solution](#)

21.4



The black pieces are rather tucked away on the queenside. White would like to adapt his play to this factor. How did he do this?

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 22

# Space advantage

### 22.1 Introduction

Do you know people with claustrophobia? Or perhaps you suffer from it yourself? It is only a normal phenomenon that a man does not feel comfortable in small, close spaces.

Again, a parallel between daily life and the game of chess is easily made.

Actually it is logical that in a chess game too, freedom of movement plays an important role. The old teacher Tarrasch had quite extreme views on this: the seed of defeat was already sown if one of the players had to contend with a significant lack of space. By now we know that this axiom is too dogmatic, and we will see examples to that effect later on in this chapter.

Still, Tarrasch was partly right. The player who has more space can manoeuvre more easily with his pieces. His space advantage allows him, among other things, to switch from one wing to the other more quickly. The player with a lack of space will have trouble switching his pieces. The cooperation between his pieces can be disturbed, not to mention certain paralysis symptoms that manifest themselves when he is setting up his pieces.

Let's first have a look at a schematic example, where an advantage in space allows a quick piece switch.

In the diagram position, White has tried to conquer the a-file, but Black has managed to oppose just in time. Thanks to his enormous space advantage, White can now quickly transfer the battle to the kingside.





### 1.h5! bxa4+

Despite the delicate circumstances, this is Black's best chance.

After 1...c6, White breaks through on the other side of the board: 2.hxg6 hxg6 3.Rh2 Rg8 4.axb5 cxb5 5.Rh7+ Ka8 6.Rah1, and Black will lose at least a pawn.

### 2.Kxa4!

Surprisingly, White takes back with the king, in order to prepare the following doubling on the h-file.

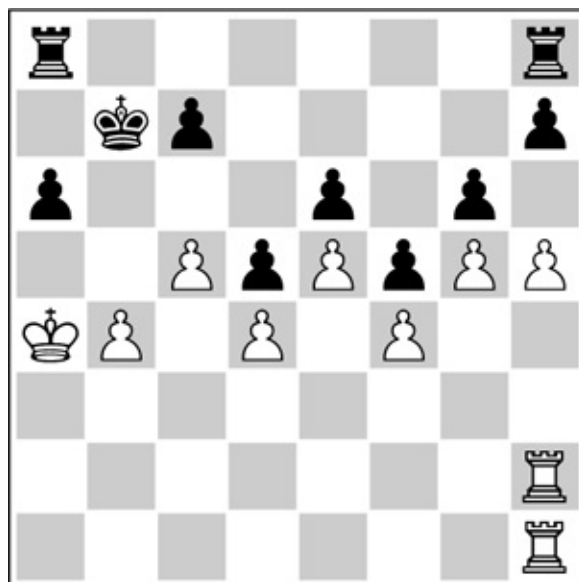
### 2...Rh8

2...a5 does not help either after 3.b5 gxh5 4.Rh2 Rg8 5.Rxh5 Rg7 6.Rah1, and the switch of the white rooks is much quicker than that of the black ones.

Another defensive attempt, 2...Rg8, is also doomed to failure: after 3.Rh1 c6 4.hxg6 hxg6 5.Rh7+ Kb8 there follows 6.Rah2, and Black doesn't stand a chance.

### 3.Rh2 Raa8 4.Rah1

Here it turns out that Black cannot maintain control of the h-file due to his lack of space.

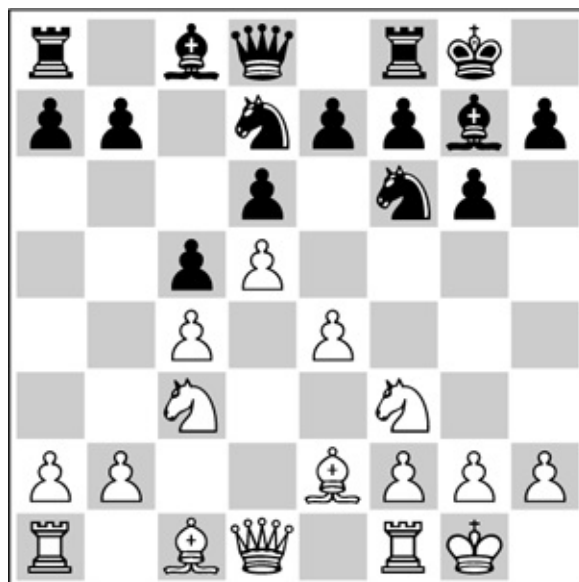


**4...Rhg8 5.hxg6 hxg6 6.Rh7 Rae8 7.Ka5 Kc6 8.R1 h6 Kb7 9.Rf7**  
and the win is only a matter of time.

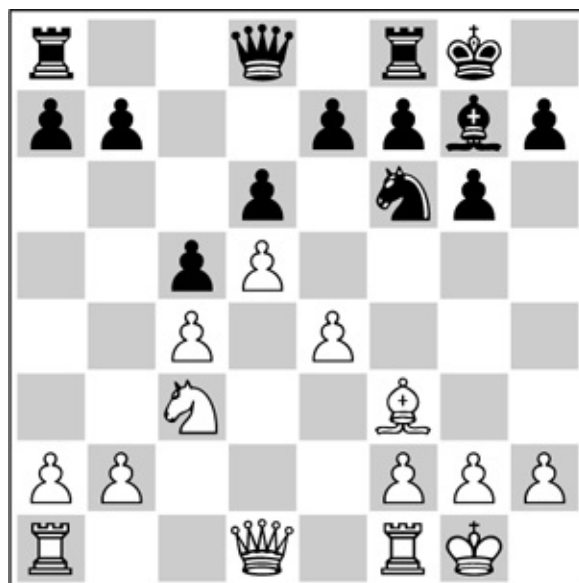
In many of my own games I can also count on a significant space advantage. This way of ‘pressing’ on the enemy position, which Petrosian has taught us, has caused despair with a number of my opponents as well. When I had one of those closed positions on the board again, I could already hear the comments of my club mates: ‘You’ve got so much space – you can put two arms on the lower half of the board without pushing over any pieces!’

## 22.2 Which pieces should be exchanged?

An important strategy for the player who lacks space is to exchange pieces. That sounds logical, as piece exchanges will automatically create more elbow room for him. Compare the following two diagrams.



Compared to the first diagram, Black has traded off two pieces in the second. The difference is obvious.



In the first diagram his pieces are in each other's way – especially the bishop on c8 is hampered by the knight on d7 which, in turn, is hindered by the knight on f6. In short, the cooperation between the pieces is disturbed.

In the second diagram there is no trouble at all for the black player. His minor pieces are harmoniously placed, as a result of which he does not experience any problems through his disadvantage in space. To the lack of harmony within the own lines we have already paid extensive attention in Chapter 19.

In the meantime, though, we have made an important discovery:

- In principle, the player who has more space should avoid exchanges.

In the following game, the white player knows exactly which pieces he can and cannot exchange.

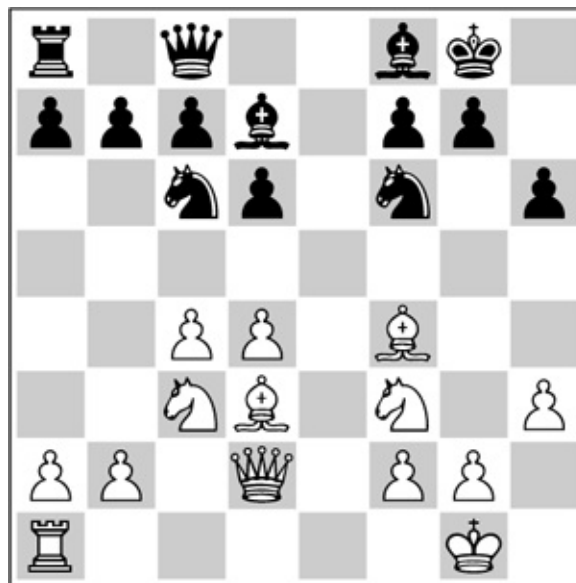
RG 4.2 (C42)

☐ **Fischer, Robert**

■ **Gheorghiu, Florin**

Buenos Aires 1970 (3)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 Be7 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.h3 0-0 8.0-0 Re8 9.c4 Nc6 10.Nc3 h6 11.Re1 Bf8 12.Rxe8 Qxe8 13.Bf4 Bd7 14.Qd2 Qc8**

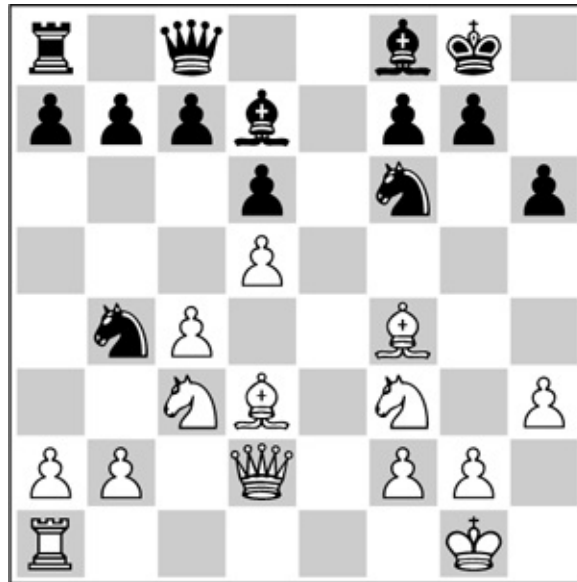


Black has little space, and his pieces are badly in each others way. With his last move he indicates that he would gladly swap the light-squared bishops on f5. After this trade, the d7-square would be vacated for the queen, so that the rook on a8 can be brought into play as well. However, White puts a stop to that.

**15.d5**

In this way, Fischer increases his advantage in space and at the same time vacates the square d4 for a piece. The alternative was 15.g4?, but that is a much too drastic approach, which would immediately be refuted: 15...Bxg4 16.hxg4 Qxg4+ 17.Bg3 Qxf3, and Black has won two pawns.

**15...Nb4**



### 16.Ne4!

It is often difficult to determine which pieces you want and which you do not want to exchange. With the text move Fischer indicates that he will gladly exchange his queen's knight for Black's king's knight.

### 16...Nxe4

If Black wanted to gain the bishop pair with 16...Nxd3, he would have to allow a horrible doubled pawn in his king's position with 17.Nxf6+ gxf6 18.Qxd3, which seems too high a price to pay. But in view of the further course of the game, perhaps he should have gone for that line.

### 17.Bxe4 Na6 18.Nd4

This was the intention of his sixteenth move. Now that the square d4 has been vacated for the knight, White can prevent the liberating ...Bf5 in an elegant way. So White does not allow the bishop swap, and as a consequence the black pieces on the queenside are slightly tangled up. In particular, the rook on a8 is out of play for the moment.

The text move is better than 18.Qc2, with which White would stir up trouble for himself. After 18...Nc5, White is forced to play 19.Bh7+, but here this does not look so pretty anymore. Also 18.g4 will turn out badly. After 18...Nc5 19.Bc2, Black can again take on g4 with the bishop.

### 18...Nc5 19.Bc2 a5

A suitable moment to choose the direction in which the game should develop.

### 20.Re1

White develops his rook as quickly as possible, with the intention of involving the rook in the attack on the kingside. Due to his lack of space, Black has trouble getting round to the same kind of switch.

**20...Qd8 21.Re3 b6 22.Rg3 Kh8**

The white pieces have taken up menacing positions, and White now faces the problem of how to increase the pressure.



**23.Nf3!**

Typically Fischer! An appealing move was 23.Nf5?!, but Black has reasonable chances of staying alive after 23...Bxf5. Fischer wants to keep the knight and at the same time vacate the d4-square for a piece – which one is yet to be determined –, increasing the pressure.

**23...Qe7**

Black realized in time that 23...Qf6 fails to 24.Be3!, followed by 25.Bd4, which is a merit of White's 23rd move.

**24.Qd4 Qf6**

Sad necessity, as after 24...f6 25.Nh4, Black could have packed it in right away.

**25.Qxf6**

White obtains an additional advantage: the opponent's pawn structure is ruined.

**25...gxf6 26.Nd4 Re8**



At long last the black rook threatens to become active. How should White react to this?

**27.Re3!**

This move once more underlines how efficiently Fischer approached the game. The black rook threatens to become active and therefore needs to be exchanged off. White assumes that an endgame with minor pieces will lead to a win in the long run, on account of his space advantage and Black's ruined pawn structure. Incidentally, 27.Kf1 was a good alternative.

**27...Rb8**

Gheorghiu takes Fischer's word for it and avoids the rook swap.

**28.b3b5 29.cxb5 Bxb5**

White can always gain the bishop pair, but he wants more.

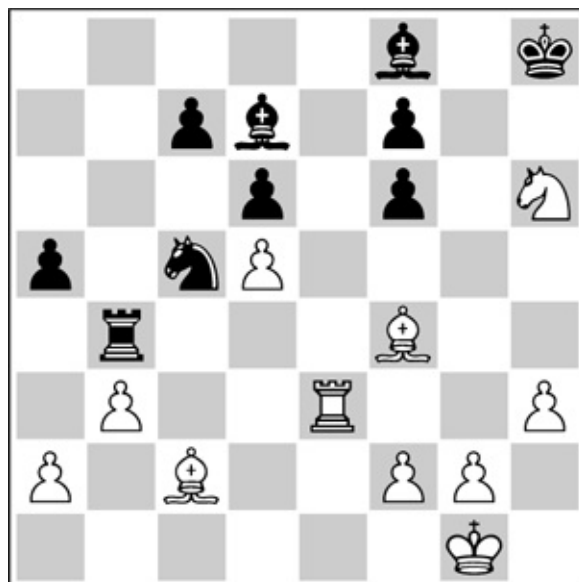
**30.Nf5**

The principled way to convert his collected advantages into material gain. The knight intervenes on the kingside. By the way, I fail to see what there was against 30.Nxb5. White then has two bishops in an open position and his rook can penetrate on the back rank, winning a pawn: 30...Rxb5 31.Re8 Kg7 32.Bxh6+ Kxh6 33.Rxf8, with a very favourable ending.

**30...Bd7**

After 30...h5 the pawn is also doomed. White can capture a pawn in several ways, for instance: 31.Ng3 h4 32.Nh5.

**31.Nxh6 Rb4**



White had to foresee this move. He has a cut-and-dried reply.

**32.Rg3!**

The right continuation, at least for a human chess player. White threatens to give mate, so that Black has no time to take the bishop. Only a computer 'sees' that White can also continue with 32.Nxf7+. After 32...Kg7 White saves his piece in a miraculous way: 33.Nd8!, and now 33...Rxf4 is not possible in view of 34.Rg3+ Kh6 (34...Kh8 35.Nf7#) 35.Nf7+ Kh5 36.Rg8 Ne4 37.Bd1+ Kh4 38.Rh8+, and Black gets mated.

**32...Bxh6 33.Bxh6 Ne4?**

Black makes an ugly mistake, which relieves him from his suffering.

**34.Bg7+**

The right move. White wins at least a second pawn.

**34...Kh7**

Neither did the opposite-coloured bishop ending after 34...Kg8 35.Bxe4 Rxe4 36.Bxf6+ Kf8 offer Black any chance to save the game after 37.Rc3.

**35.f3!**

**1-0**

There is another former World Champion who also knows a thing or two about exploiting a space advantage.

RL 16.8 (C72)

□ **Karpov,Anatoly**

■ **Westerinen,Heikki**

Niceol 1974 (11)

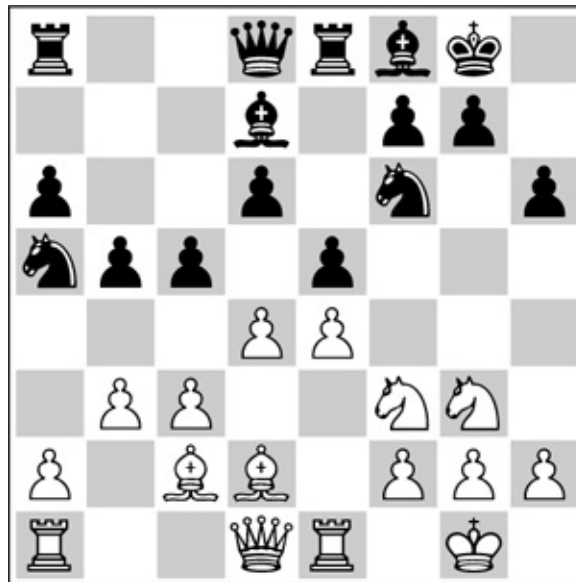


**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 d6 5.0-0 Bd7 6.d4 Nf6 7.c3 Be7 8.Nbd2 0-0 9.Re1 Re8 10.Nh3 h6 11.Ng3 Bf8 12.Bd2 b5 13.Bc2 Na5 14.b3 c5**

With his last move, Black has mounted some pressure on White's pawn centre. Now White has three possibilities:

- A) Maintaining the tension and developing further with, for example, 15.Rc1.
- B) Breaking the tension with the 15.dxe5 dxe5 swap, and then playing for the square d5.
- C) Breaking the tension by closing the centre with 15.d5.

Which of these three possibilities would you choose?



### 15.d5

The choice wasn't difficult, since this chapter deals with space advantages. The text move turns the black knight on a5 into another source of worry, as the beast cannot return to its natural square c6.

The plan under B) also isn't bad sometimes, but if White had wanted to play this, the white knight should have gone to e3, in order to play for the square d5. In the present circumstances, therefore, this would not be the right battle plan.

### 15...Nh7

With this move Black has an important idea, and White must react adequately. Westerinen has acknowledged that he lacks space, and he tries to trade off a piece with 16...Ng5.

### 16.h3

A small, but very efficient move! White does not allow Black to swap a knight, since he could now meet 16...Ng5 with 17.Nh2!. Also, ...Bg4 is ruled out permanently.

### 16...Be7



### 17.Nf5

Placing Black in a dilemma. Although we have established that exchanges help Black, he cannot really take on f5, as that would mean giving up his best minor piece, and he would be in trouble on the light squares later on. Another nice example of the strategic question: which piece to swap?

### 17...Nb7

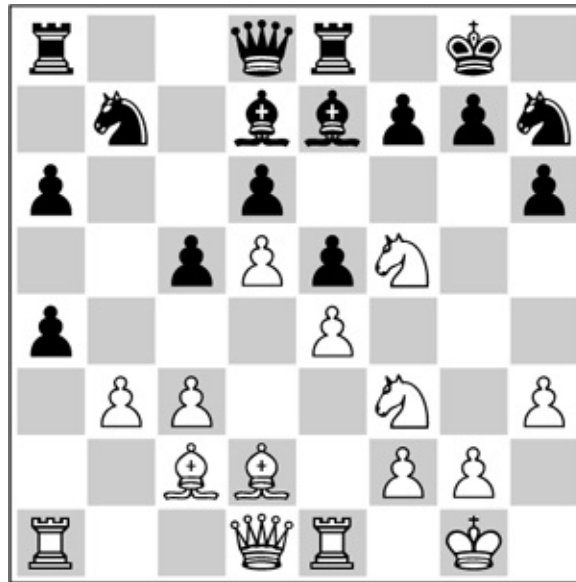
By giving the pawn on d6 extra protection, Black is now ready to trade off his bad e7 bishop on g5. If White continues with 18. Re 2, preventing the swap (18...Bg5 is met by 19.Be1), he will allow himself to be driven back somewhat. Therefore he takes action now.

### 18.a4

With this action, Karpov transfers his operations to the queenside.

### 18...bxa4?

If Westerinen had known what awaited him after this move, he would have thought twice about it.



### 19.b4!!

A magnificent idea, which Black had not foreseen. ‘Chess is not checkers’, is a common saying among Dutch chess trainers. They mean that in chess we are not obliged to recapture, and so we should always keep an ‘open eye’ for other moves. Automatic recaptures are sometimes not best. Karpov’s intention is to keep the black knight on b7 ‘in jail’. Furthermore, White can now recapture on a4 with his bishop, threatening to exploit the weaknesses on the light squares in Black’s camp (square c6!).

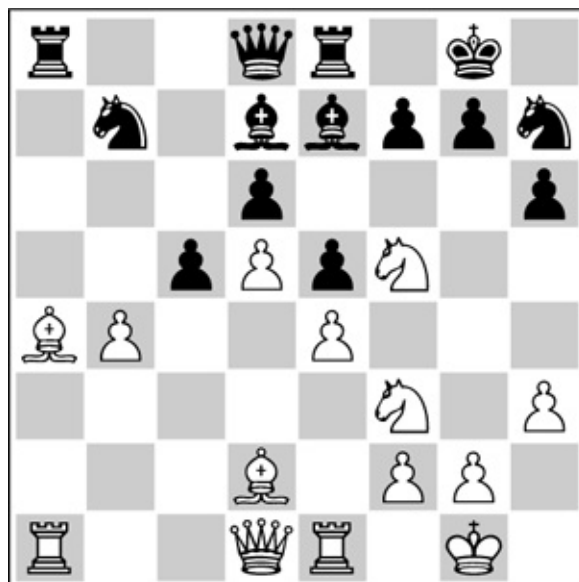
After 19.bxa4? Black wouldn’t have too many problems anymore.

### 19...a5

Black is fighting hard to untie himself, by eliminating all the pawns on the queen-side and thereby freeing the c5-square for his bad knight. However, it is questionable whether this opening of the position on this side of the board favours him, since his pieces are less mobile than White’s.

By interposing an extra swap on b4 with 19...cxb4 20.cxb4 a5, Black would still have ended up in an unpleasant position: 21.Bxa4 axb4 22.Bxb4 (also 22.Bc6 Rxa1 23.Qxa1 Nc5 24.Bxb4 Nd3 25.Rb1 Nxb4 26.Rxb4 will give White a virtually decisive positional advantage) 22...Bxa4 23.Rxa4 Bf8 24.Nd2 gives White free hand on the queenside.

### 20.Bxa4 axb4 21.cxb4



### **21...Bf8?!**

Black changes plans, because he does not trust 21...cxb4 in view of the trick 22.Bxd7. Now, 22...Rxa1 is necessary (since 22...Qxd7 fails to 23.Rxa8 Rxa8 24.Nxe5 dxe5 25.Qg4, cunningly winning the queen in view of the double threat 26.Qxg7# and 26.Nxh6+) 23.Qxa1 Qxd7, but after 24.Bxb4 White also controls the position.

### **22.Bc6!**

By far and away the best move. Black is deadlocked now, because the bishop cannot be captured; the unfortunate knight on b7 would have no squares in that case.

### **22...Qc7 23.b5**

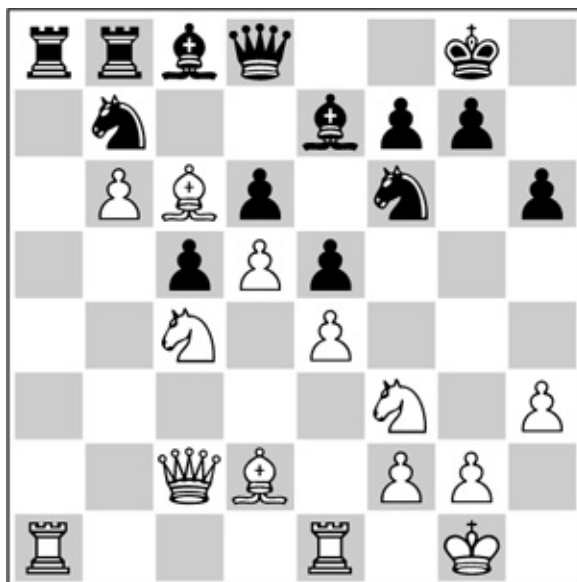
Of course! Now Black does not get a chance to exchange on b4, whereas White obtains a giant passed pawn. As a result, Black cannot move an inch now.

**23...Nf6 24.Qc2 Reb8** It is clear that White has been very successful on the queenside. Karpov carries on in meticulous style.

### **25.Ne3**

Hitting the nail on the head. The knight prepares to exert a paralysing influence from the c4-square.

### **25...Bc8 26.Nc4 Be7 27.b6 Qd8**



Now Black is completely tied up. With his next move White makes use of a tactic to make further progress.

**28.Ra7!**

White exploits the foothold on a7 to double his rooks.

**28...Nd7**

White would prefer Black to take on a7, as the passed pawn on a7 would bring about an immediate decision: 28...Rxa7 29.bxa7 Ra8 30.Ra1 and there is no remedy against the threat of 31.Qb3, followed by 32.Nb6.

**29.Qa4 Rxa7**

Now this is forced.

**30.bxa7 Ra8 31.Qa6**

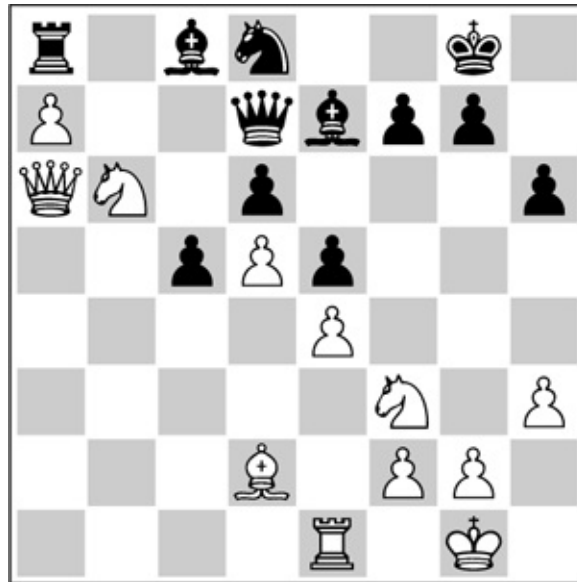
Here, 31.Rb1 would have been easier.

**31...Qc7 32.Bxd7 Qxd7**

On 32...Bxd7, 33.Nb6 would win at least an exchange.

**33.Nb6 Nd8**

A final convulsion.



### 34.Qa1!

With this artistic move Karpov creates a fitting end to a consistently played game. After both 34...Qxa7 35.Nxa8 and 34...Rxa7 35.Nxd7 Rxa1 36.Rxa1 Bxd7 37.Ra7, Black will lose material. Therefore, he resigned.

We have now seen two examples where a player was slowly ‘squeezed to death’ by small strategic means. Eventually he was brought down by a dire lack of space and counterplay.

Sometimes a space advantage leads to a direct attack on the king. In the following game we see how White converts this advantage tactically.

QI 14.5 (E15)

□ **Sosonko,Genna**

■ **Helmers,Knut**

Reykjavik 1980 (4)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Nbd2c5 6.e4**



**6...Bb7? 7.d5**

Black's last move wasn't a very good one. The pawn on d5, on the other hand, guarantees White a great space advantage.

**7...exd5 8.exd5**

This should be preferred above the other recapture. The bishop on b7 is now 'banging its head against' the pawn on d5, and later on, thanks to his advantage in space, White will be able to conduct operations along the e-file. Black does not have a shred of counterplay.

With 8.cxd5 White would create a Benoni-like structure, where Black could at least counter with ...b6-b5.

**8...Be7**

Perhaps 8...g6 and 9...Bg7 would have been slightly better.

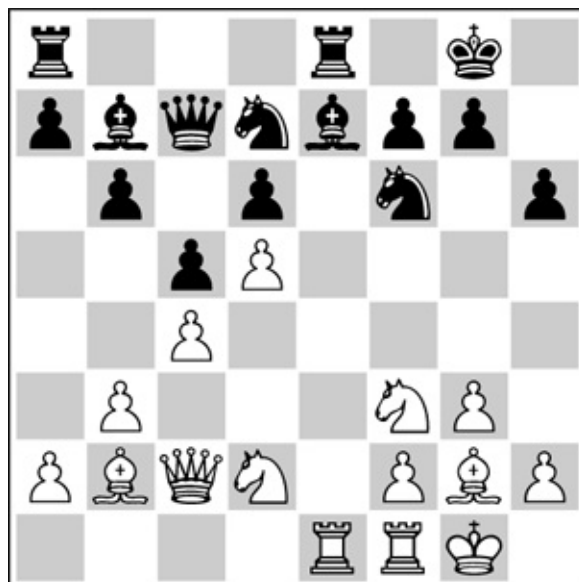
**9.Bg2 d6 10.0-0 0-0 11.b3**

The logical continuation. White places his queen's bishop on the long diagonal, and at the same time strengthens his centre.

**11 ...Nbd7 12.Bb2 Re8 13.Qc2 h6?!**

A weakening that Black should preferably have avoided.

**14.Rae1 Qc7**



Both players have now completed their development, and in the following White effectively improves his pieces.

#### **15.Nh4**

The knight is beckoned by the square f5, because of the weakening pawn move ...h7-h6.

#### **15...Bf8 16.Ne4!**

From the game Fischer-Gheorghiu, earlier in this chapter, we have learned that it is important to swap the right pieces. White would like to eliminate a defender of the black king, and he also wants to put a minor piece on e4 and double his rooks behind it. White keeps the threat of Nh4-f5 alive, and with the text move he prevents the exchange of all the rooks, like Karpov did against Unzicker with the move 2.Ba7!! in Chapter 14.

#### **16...Nxe4 17.Bxe4 Be7**

Due to his lack of space and the bad positions of his pieces on the queenside, who will hardly be able to partake in the battle on the kingside, Black cannot do anything.

#### **18.Nf5 Bf6**

White has manoeuvred his minor pieces into promising positions. Now all that remains is to activate the major pieces.



## 19.Re2!

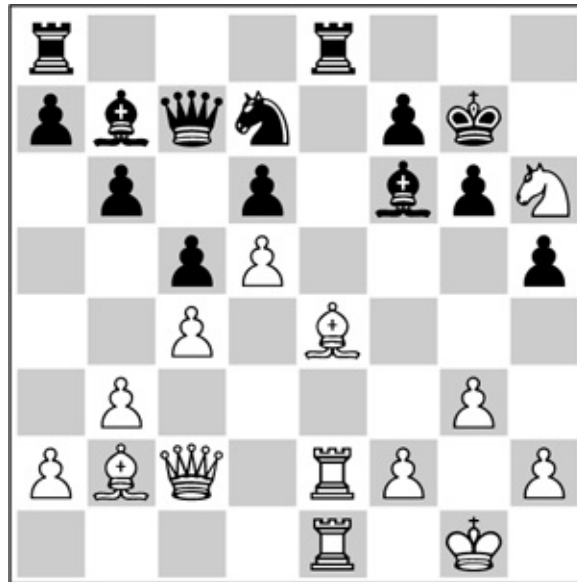
Small moves are often the best! This also applies to this rook move. For one, it is better than 19.Bxf6, since after 19...Nxf6 White would have unnecessarily traded off an attacking piece. With the text move White takes his time to double the rooks and then waits for events to develop.

## 19...h5?!

Another weakening, which is more or less understandable, but cannot be justified. Black wants to chase away the white knight with ...g6 without having this pawn hanging on h6, but if we take the further course of the game into account, he should have gone for the pawn sacrifice

## 20.Rfe1 Bxb2

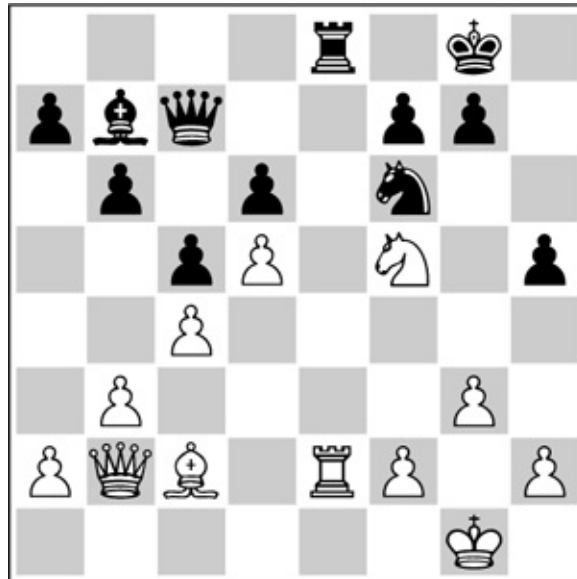
The black player decides against the planned 20...g6 after all, since White had prepared a small combination: 21.Nh6+ Kg7



Analysis diagram

22.Nxf7! and White's attack is decisive, as becomes clear after 22...Kxf2 3.Bxg6+, and White wins. Or 22...Rxe4 23.Qxe4 Kxf7 (23...Bxb2 24.Ng5) 24.Qe6+Kg7 25.Qe7+.

**21.Qxb2 Nf6 22.Bc2 Rxe2 23.Rxe2 Re8**



The black position still doesn't look rosy, but it looks as if Helmers has managed to save himself. The most important attacking pieces are threatened with exchange. For Black, the dawn turns out to be just before the darkest hour.

**24.Qxf6!!**

Splendid foresight by the Dutch grandmaster. This was what White had planned

when he retreated his bishop to c2. By sacrificing a queen for a rook and a minor piece, White exposes the black king to a combined attack of the remaining white pieces. But especially the factor that the remaining black pieces hardly have anything to say on the kingside, will decide the issue.

**24...gxf6 25.Rxe8+**

**1-0**

Here Black resigned. Justifiably, since after the forced 25...Kh7, the point of White's combination is 26.Re7 (26.Nxd6+ is no mean move either), after which Black has to give up material: 26...Qb8 27.Rxf7+ Kh8 28.Nh6, and the mate threat on h7 decides.

## 22.3 Lack of space as an advantage!

The heading above this section is just as mysterious as the following game is.

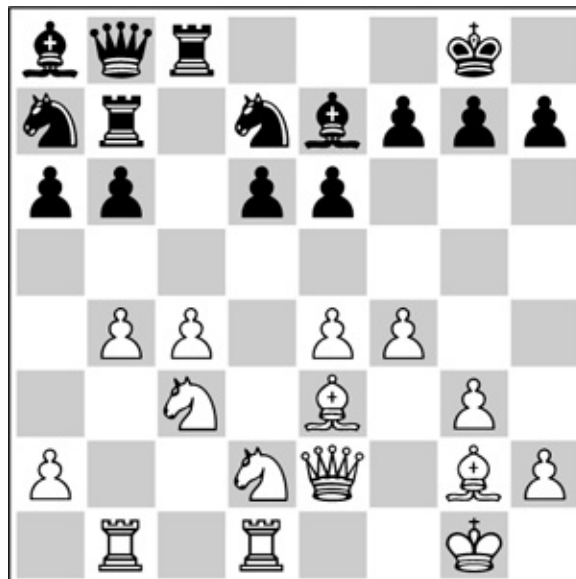
EO 40.6 (A34)

□ **Stean, Michael**

■ **Andersson, Ulf**

Amsterdam 1979 (7)

**1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 c5 3.g3 e6 4.Nf3 b6 5.Bg2 Bb7 6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4 Nc6 8.Qf4 Bb4 9.Bd2 0-0 10.0-0 Be7 11.Rfd1 a6 12.e4 d6 13.Qe3 Ra7!? 14.Qe2 Qb8 15.Be3 Ba8 16.Nd2 Rc8 17.Rab1 Nd7 18.b4 Rb7 19.f4 Na7**



**20.Rdc1 Rbc7 21.Qd3 h6 22.Ne2 Nf6**

**1/2-1/2**

As a young man of 21, I visited the IBM grandmaster tournament in the Amsterdam RAI one day. There were many interesting positions on the

demonstration boards, but the course of the above game especially caught my eye. I rushed to the commentary room to see if there would be any comments given to this game.

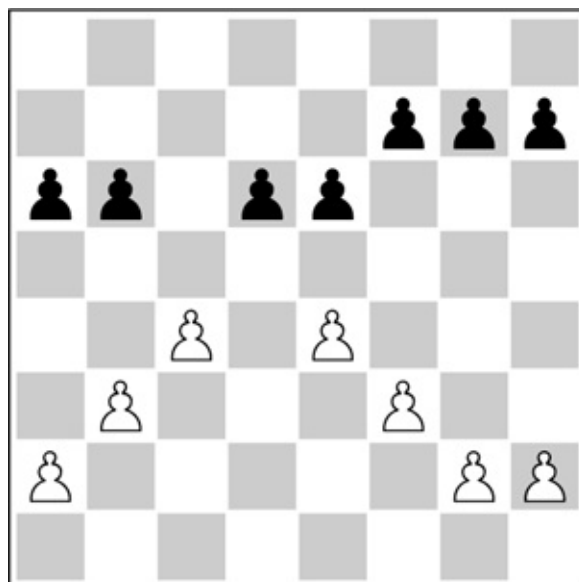
Soon it became clear to me that the commentator didn't know what to say about it either, judging by several of his phrases that I overheard: 'The black player must be tired of life, he crawls back to the three lowest ranks', and: 'This does not look anything like a game of chess. It's more like building with Lego blocks'.

But this was a game between two strong grandmasters! In other words, the black position had to be viable for one reason or another. What could a strong player like Ulf Andersson see in such trench warfare? Was it fear? An exaggerated sense of danger? Did he only want to draw with black?

When I got to the bottom of this game, it soon became clear to me that The Hedgehog, which is what this system is called, was more than just a frightened retreat to the lower ranks. When I played through several games with this system I noticed that Black was always fully in the game. What's more, there were a number of strong players who employed the system.

By way of all kinds of strange move orders in the opening (for example, 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nf3 cxd4 4.Nxd4 b6), The Hedgehog could appear on the board, and in most cases Black could play very sharply. In those days Black even achieved a small plus score with The Hedgehog, as far as I could establish from the available data.

It was time to subject The Hedgehog to closer examination. The most important characteristic I found was that a black c-pawn is traded for a white d-pawn, as also happens in the Sicilian. Another characteristic is that there are white pawns on e4 and c4. According to Maroczy (after whom this white set-up is named), White is better because of his pleasant space advantage. But was this assessment correct, looking at these examples? Probably there was more to this cheeky set-up. I tried to discover some logic to it by myself.



Black places a number of pawns on the sixth rank: a6, b6, d6, e6, and sometimes also g6 and h6. Here it dawned on me: these pawns have the function of a Hedgehog's spines! White controls four ranks, but he can hardly approach with his pieces, since they are always warded off by the black pawns. It's just what a hedgehog does when it feels threatened: it curls up and keeps the enemy at bay! The picture I saw when playing through these games was that Black lines up his pieces as harmoniously as possible on the first three ranks, in the meantime anticipating his opponent's moves. From the trenches he patiently waits for his chances to occur, and in the meantime prepares a counter-thrust. By way of a counter-thrust, he has two important options at his disposal:

**a) the central thrust ...d6-d5**

If White permits himself a few pawn weakening moves like b2-b4, f2-f4 or maybe g2-g4, Black can see if the time is right to break open the centre with ...d6-d5. If the centre pawns are exchanged and the position is opened, White's position will contain several holes that can be exploited by Black.

**b) the flank attack with ...b6-b5**

In many games it turns out to be difficult for White to stop the push ...b6-b5. As soon as Black has carried this through, and cxb5 axb5 follows, Black is ready to chase away the important white knight on c3 with ...b4. If this strategy works, then in most cases carrying through ...d5 will not be a problem either, after which the initiative passes on to the black player.

Below we will have a look at some of these breakthroughs in the centre. Of course, this does not cover all the problems exhaustively. And you may have noticed that I have painted a somewhat one-sided picture of this system. Indeed,

in both cases I have only mentioned the chances for the black player.  
You will get it by now: I've started to play The Hedgehog myself] This was mainly triggered by the following game, which made a great impression on me at the time:

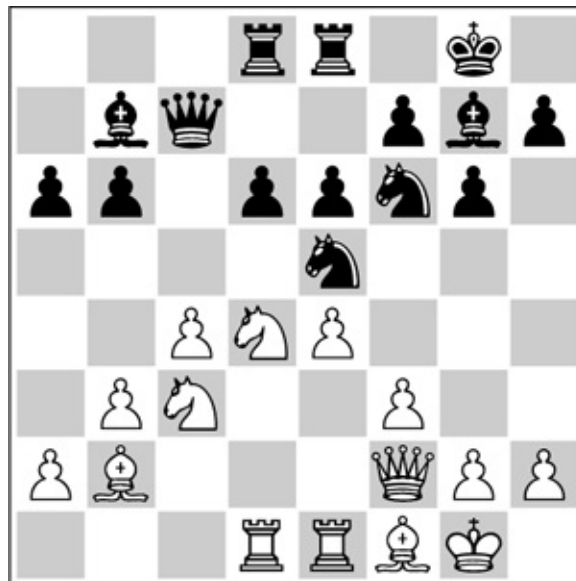
SI 42.5 (B42)

□ **Byrne,Robert**

■ **Andersson,Ulf**

Amsterdam 1979 (12)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Bd3 g6 6.b3 d6 7.0-0 Bg7 8.Bb2 Nf6 9.c4 0-0 10.Nc3 Nbd7 11.Re1 Re8 12.Bf1 b6 13.Qd2 Bb7 14.Rad1 Qc7 15.f3 Rad8 16.Qf2 Ne5



**17.Rc1?**

A stereotyped move, which White probably played without long deliberation. Because of the vis-N-vis of rook and queen, the following move must have come like a bolt from the blue for Byrne.

**17...d5!!**

Precisely at a moment when White does not expect it, Black comes up with this central push.

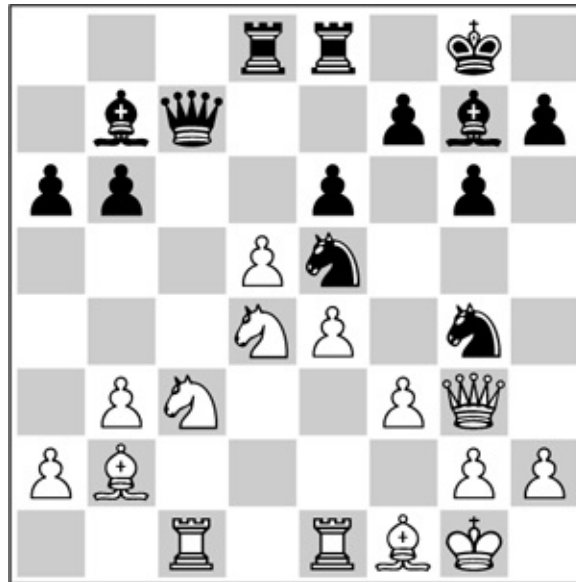
**18.exd5**

Strangely enough, the capture with this pawn is White's best chance. More logical was 18.cxd5 (since the rook has just been placed on the c-file), but to that move Andersson had prepared a fantastic rejoinder: 18...Nfg4!, and now we are

at a crossroads.

A) 19.fxg4? Nxg4 20.Qg3 Bxd4+ 21.Kh1 Nf2+, and Black wins;

B) 19.Qg3?!.



Analysis diagram

Now another magnificent motif follows: 19...Nd3!., and Black wins in all variations. The main line leads to mate: 20.Qxc7 (after 20.Nce2 Qxg3 21.hxg3 Nxe1, White cannot count on anything either) 20...Bxd4+ 21.Kh1 Ndf2+ 22.Kg1 Nh3+ 23.Kh1 Ngf2#;

C) 19.Na4?! Qxc1! 20.fxg4 (20.Rxc1 Nxf2 21.Kxf2 exd5) 20...Qc7, and Black has won an exchange;

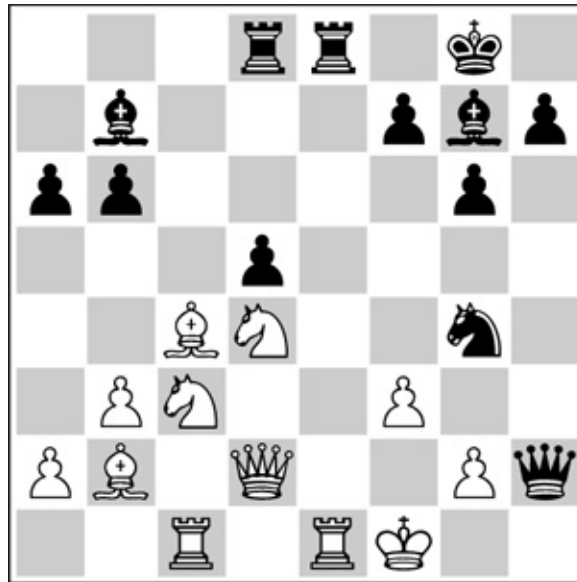
D) 19.Qh4 Bf6 20.Qh3, and here also, Black can strike: 20...Nxf3+! 21.gxf3 Bxd4+, with a huge advantage, for example: 22.Kg2 Ne3+ 23.Kh1 Qe5 24.dxe6 Rxe6, and due to the dominant position of the black pieces in the centre, White cannot move a muscle.

But also after the text move, Black has a similar combination.

**18...Nfg4!19.Qg3**

After 19.Qd2 it would be very tempting to continue with 19...Bh6?! 20.Qc2 (because after 20.f4 Black wins elegantly with 20...Bxf4! 21.Qxf4 Nf3+ 22.Qxf3 Qxh2#) 20...Be3+, and Black will be ahead in material.

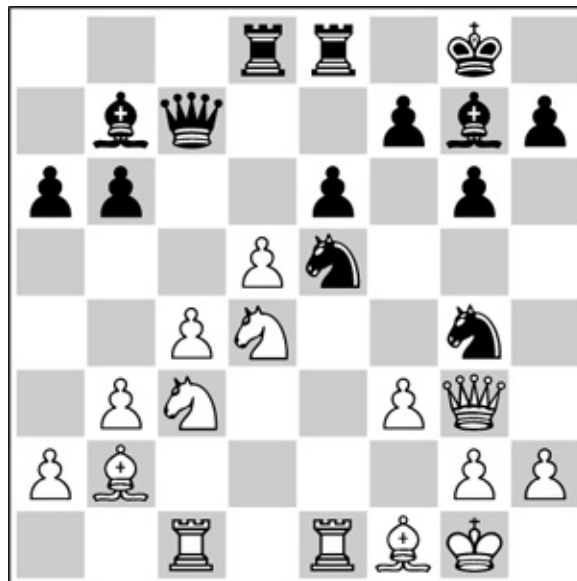
However, much stronger is: 19...Nxc4!! 20.Bxc4 Qxh2+ 21. Kf1 exd5.



Analysis diagram

Since Black has now opened the e-file, the acute mate threat 22...Qh1 can only be prevented at the cost of huge material loss: 22.fxg4 dxc4 23.Rxe8+ Rxe8 24.Nd1 Qh1+ 25.Kf2 Qxg2#.

Yet another interesting alternative is 19.Qh4 Bf6 20.Qg3, and here also, Black makes use of the above-mentioned motif: 20...Nd3!.



**19...Nxf3+!**

Geary the bombardment hasn't stopped yet.

**20.gxf3**

Forced, since after 20.Qxf3?? White is mated by 20...Qxh2; and 20.Nxf3 fails to



20...Qc5+ 21.Kh1 Nf2+ 22.Kg1 Ne4+, followed by ...Nxg3+, winning the queen.

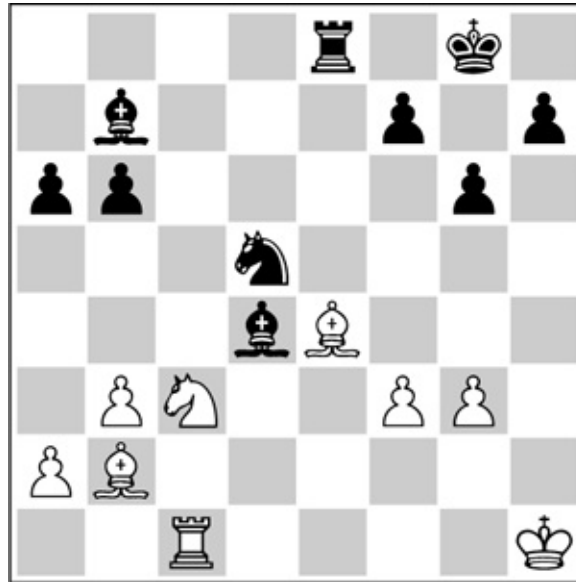
**20...Bxd4+ 21.Kh1 Qxg3**

Now Black liquidates to a winning ending.

**22.hxg3 Ne3 23.Bd3 exd5 24.cxd5 Nxd5**

It seems that 24...Bxd5 was somewhat simpler. After 25.Be4 Bxe4 26.fxe4 Re5, the technical job is not difficult anymore.

**25.Rxe8+ Rxe8 26.Be4**



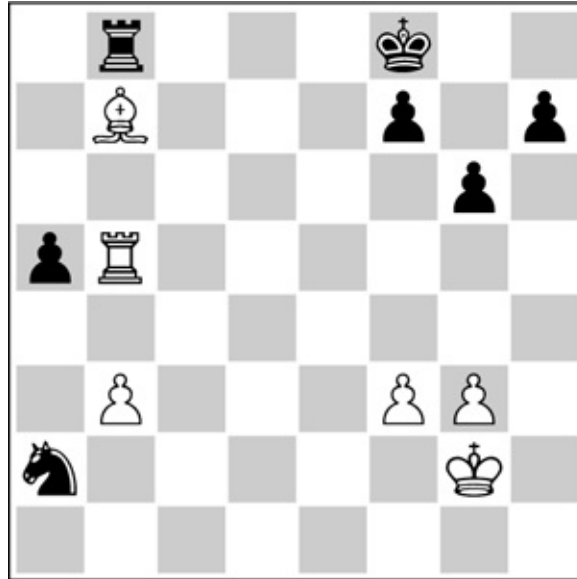
The combination has ‘merely’ led to the win of a pawn, and after the following move, converting that pawn seems to be a problem. But Andersson’s technique is impeccable.

**26...Bxc3! 27.Bxc3 Nxc3 28.Bxb7 Nxa2 29.Rc6 a5 30.Rxb6 Rb8!**

After a forced simplification, Black has introduced a nasty pin.

**31.Kg2 Kf8 32.Rb5**

This way White hopes to get out of the pin, but really nothing is going his way in this game.



**32...Nb4! 33.Kf2 Ke7 34.Ke3 Kd6 35.Kd4 Kc7 36.Rxb4 axb4 37.Bd5**

With a pawn and an exchange to the good, the rest is not difficult.

**37...Kd6 38.Bxf7 Rf8 39.Bd5 Rf5 40.Be4 Rg5 41.g4h5**

**0-1**

It was inevitable that one day I would also make use of the thematic push shown above.

EO 47.8(A10)

□ **Tonoli, Walter**

■ **Grooten, Herman**

Sas van Gent 1990 (8)

**1.c4 b6 2.Nf3 c5 3.Nc3 Bb7 4.g3 Nf6 5.Bg2 g6 6.0-0 Bg7 7.b3 0-0 8.Bb2 d6 9.d4cxd4 10.Nxd4**

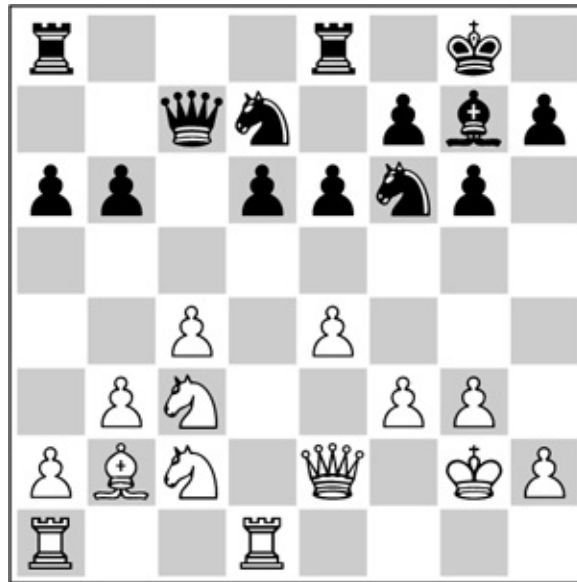
White has more chances of an advantage after 10.Qxd4.

**10...Bxg2 11.Kxg2 a6 12.e4 e6 13.Qe2 Qc7 14.Rfd1 Nbd7 15.f3?!**

This move is not necessary – yet. White should have preferred 15.Rac1.

**15...Rfe8 16.Nc2?**

With the intention to play 17.Ne3 on the next move, so as to keep the square d5 firmly under control, and to be able to besiege the pawn on d6. However, the knight move gives Black the opportunity for a slightly surprising combination.



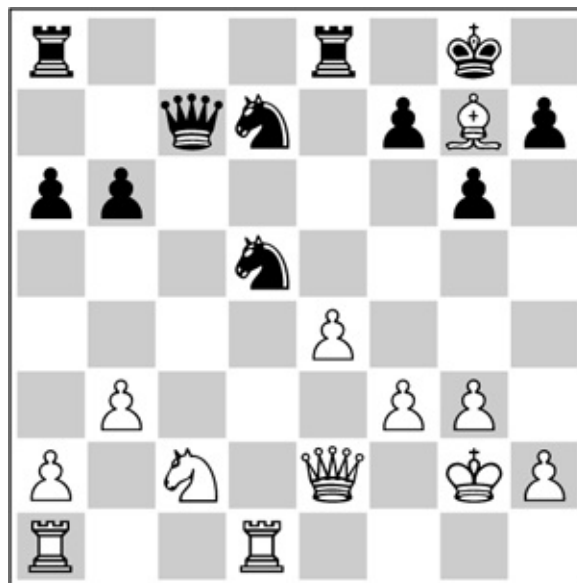
**16...d5!17.cxd5**

Also bad is 17.exd5 exd5, as the queen is hanging and Black threatens to exchange on c4 at the same time, after which this point will be a mortal weakness.

**17...exd5 18.Nxd5**

Strangely enough, here 18.Rxd5!? was White's only chance to keep the balance: 18...Nxd5 19.Nxd5 Qc5 20.Nce3 Bxb2 21.Qxb2, and White has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

**18...Nxd5 19.Bxg7**



**19...Qxc2!**

Black optimally exploits the holes that have arisen in the white position. Note,

for instance, the weakness of the square e3.

**20.Qxc2**

20.Rd2 is simply met by 20...Qc6.

**20...Ne3+ 21.Kf2 Nxc2**

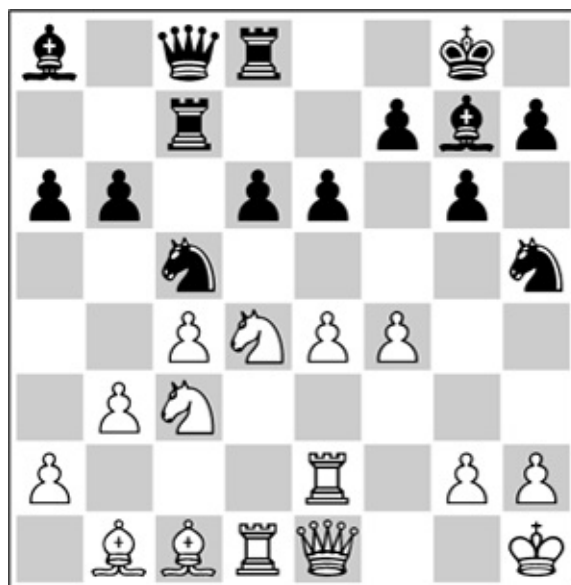
White resigned. He will be down a decisive amount of material.

In the following game I managed to seize the initiative with the breakthrough ... b6-b5.

□ **Wintzer, Joachim**

■ **Grooten, Herman**

Lugano 1989 (8)



After some heavy-duty manoeuvring on both sides, Black considers that the moment has come to put his opponent through the mill.

**1...b5!?**

I must confess that during the game, this push was a shot in the dark for me.

**2.cxb5 Bxd4!**

Black gives up this important bishop in order to make his way through the centre. The intention of the text move is to force a weakening of White's back rank.

**3.Rxd4**



### 3...Nxe4

Plausible alternatives were: 3...axb5, because 4.Nxb5?! is not so good in view of 4...Nxb3!; or 3...Nxb3 4.axb3 Rxc3.

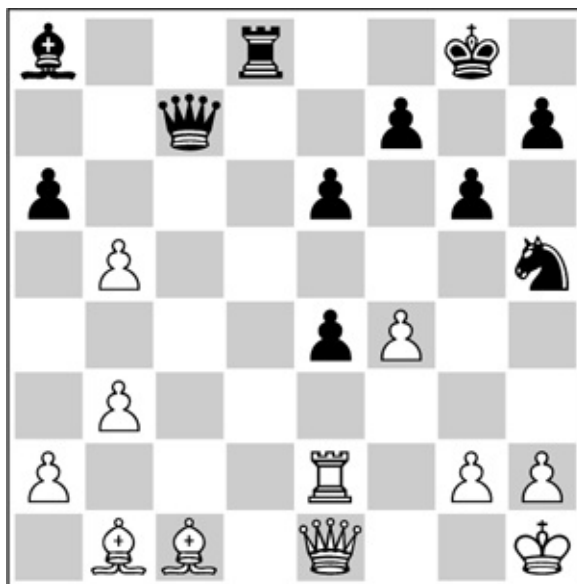
### 4.Rc4?!

White does not find the right continuation. After 4.Bxe4 Rxc3 5.Bd2 Rc5 6.Bxa8 Qxa8, things are unclear.

### 4...d5?!

But Black does not find the right continuation either. Thematic was 4...Rxc4 5.bxc4 Nxc3 6.Qxc3 axb5, when the weakness of the c4 pawn will cause trouble for White. Black does not have to fear the long diagonal, since after 7.Bb2 e5 8.fxe5 he has a killer move: 8...b4!, and now 9.Qxb4 fails to 9...Nf4 10.Rf2 dxe5, and Black's threats are decisive.

### 5.Rxc7 Qxc7 6.Nxe4 dxe4



### 7.Be3?

This costs an important tempo, which is something that White cannot permit himself in this sharp position. There are two alternatives: 7.bxa6 Nxf4 (also after 7...f5, I suspect that the black centre, combined with his actively placed pieces, outweigh the white pawn mass on the queenside) 8.Bxf4 Qxf4, and Black will have the upper hand.

An outright mistake would be 7.Bxe4? in view of 7...Bxe4 8.Rxe4 Qc2, and White will suffer on account of his back rank.

### 7...Nxf4

Black is banking on his domination in the centre. With 7...axb5 he could have maintained his advantage in a simple way.

### 8.Bxf4?!

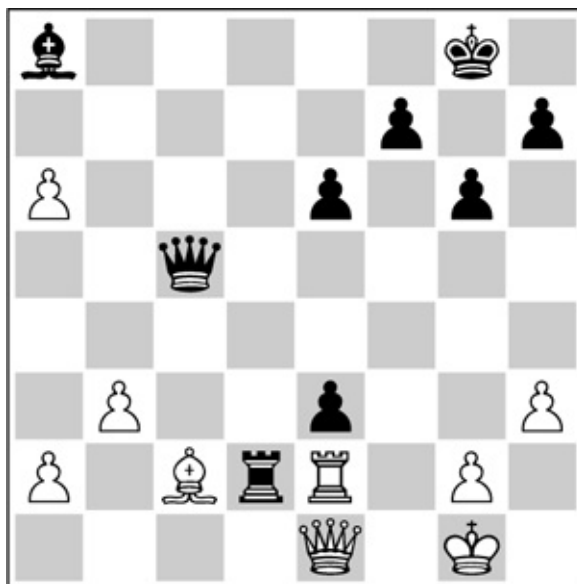
Better is 8.Rc2 Qd6 9.bxa6.

### 8...Qxf4 9.bxa6 e3!

Whatever the cost, the long diagonal must be opened.

### 10.Kg1 Rd2 11.Bc2 Qd4 12.h3Qc5

Black must apply new means to tackle his opponent.



### 13.Bd1

White has defended desperately, but after this mistake the position slowly slips through his fingers.

### 13...Rd5

In itself, this is an interesting plan. The rook strives for the g-file. However, there was a hidden win here. With 13...Rb2! Black could have secured the full point. He is threatening ... Rb1, and the rook is taboo in view of 14.Rxb2 e2+ 15.Kh1 Bxg2+! 16.Kxg2 Qd5+, and Black will get a new queen.

Curiously, 13...Rxa2? does not lead to the desired goal. White saves himself with 14.Rxa2!, and now the same combination doesn't work: 14...e2+ 15.Kh1 Bxg2+ 16.Kxg2 Qd5+ 17.Kf2 exd1Q 18.Qxd1 Qxd1 19.a7, and Black must give perpetual check.

### 14.b4

Certainly not 14.Rxe3 because of 14...Rxd1 15.Qxd1 Qxe3+.

### 14...Qd4 15.Bb3 Rg5 16.Qd1 Qb6

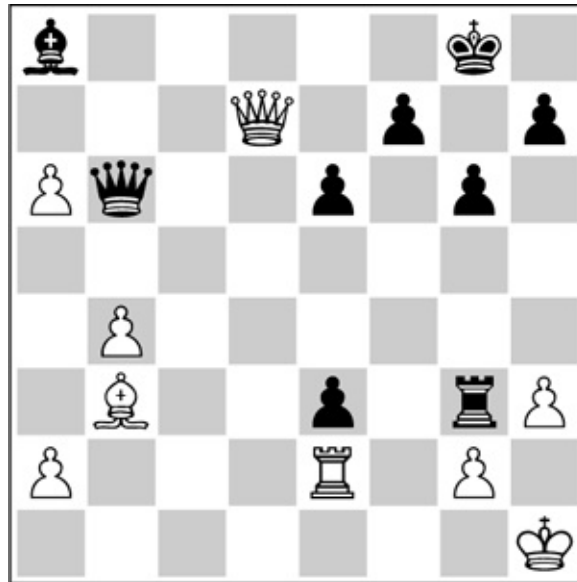
A difficult situation for the white player. Black is ready for 17...Rxb2+ 18.Rxb2 e2+, winning the queen.

### 17.Kh1

Neither would 17.Qd3 help White. After 17...Rxb2+ 18.Rxb2 e2+, the e-pawn marches on. 17.Qc1 Bf3 is no solution either.

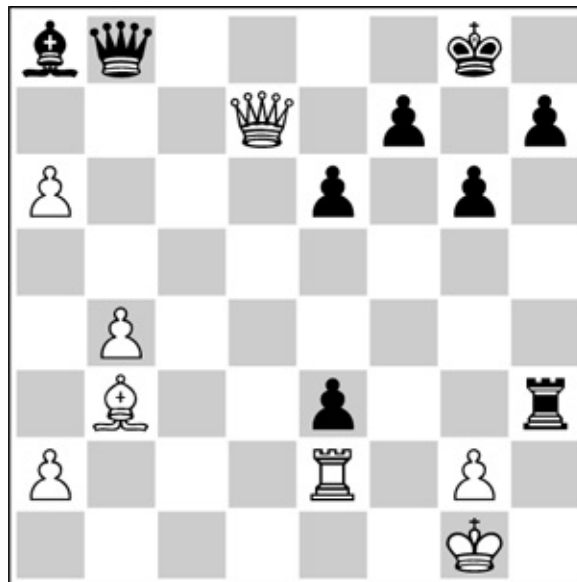
### 17...Rg3! 18.Qd7

White makes an all-out attempt which will come to naught. After 18.Kh2 Qb8 19.Kg1 Rxh3! it is also over for White. The defence 18.Qe1 fails to 18...Rxh3+ 19.Kg1 Rh5.



18...Rhx3+19.Kg1 Qb8!

0-1



A pretty move to finish with. The black queen deals the final blow on the back rank after 20.gxh3 Qg3+ 21.Kf1 Qf3+ 22.Ke1 Qh1#.

Nowadays, we know that White is a little better in a higher sense in the Hedgehog. Methods have been found to exchange off one of the 'spines' (the plans with a2-a4-a5, e4-e5, and c4-c5 are based on this), thereby creating a strong square for a piece with which White can exert annoying pressure. But these advantages are all marginal. Practice has proved that The Hedgehog remains perfectly viable in various forms.



## Exercises

22.1



White has a huge space advantage and tries to convert this into a direct attack on the king. Do you see a way for White to decide the game in his favour?

[Solution](#)

22.2



White has a significant space advantage. Still, the black fortress cannot be seized so easily. With which continuation did White take a big step forward?

[Solution](#)

22.3



White has prepared extensively for the demolition of the black position. With which breakthrough move does he attack the black pawn formation? Give a few variations.

[Solution](#)

22.4



White has an enormous space advantage. How can he make progress? Indicate a plan for White and, if possible, also a variation.

[Solution](#)

## Chapter 23

# Quiz: space advantage

### 23.1 Introduction

Once more we will dabble with one of Steinitz's Elements. In this chapter we concentrate on the 'space advantage' theme. Think carefully to which factors you must pay attention as soon as you have obtained this advantage.

### 23.2 Quiz

For an exercise with the theme 'creating and exploiting a space advantage', we again dissect a game by making use of the 'question and answer' method, which we also used in Chapters 13 and 18.

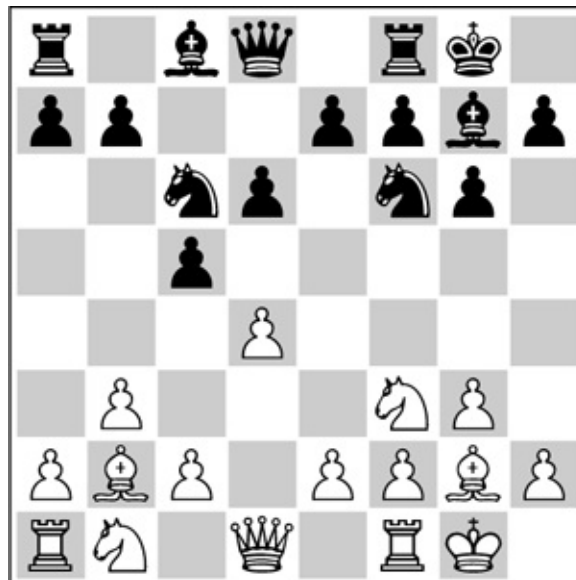
QP 6.9 (A48)

□ Smyslov, Vasily

■ Gudmundsson, Kristjan

Reykjavik 1974

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.b3 Bg7 4.Bb2 0-0 5.g3 d6 6.Bg2 c5 7.0-0 Nc6



**Question 1:** Black's last move should have been replaced by

7...cxd4. What is the best way for White to profit from Black's mistake here? Choose from:

- A) 8.d5
- B) 8.dxc5
- C) 8.e3.

### 8.d5!

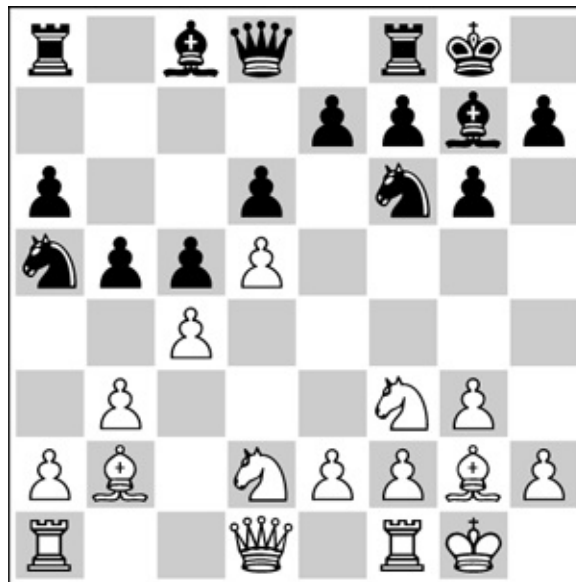
Answer to Question 1:

Answer A) is correct. White obtains a significant space advantage and chases the knight to less green pastures.

With 8.dxc5 White would release the tension in the centre, after which Black has no problems at all.

With 8.e3 White would choose a somewhat modest set-up.

**8...Na5 9.c4 a6 10.Nbd2 b5**



### Question 2:

Black tries to attack the white centre. How should White react to this? Choose from:

- A) 11.cxb5
- B) 11.e4
- C) 11.Bc3.

### 11.04

Answer to Question 2:

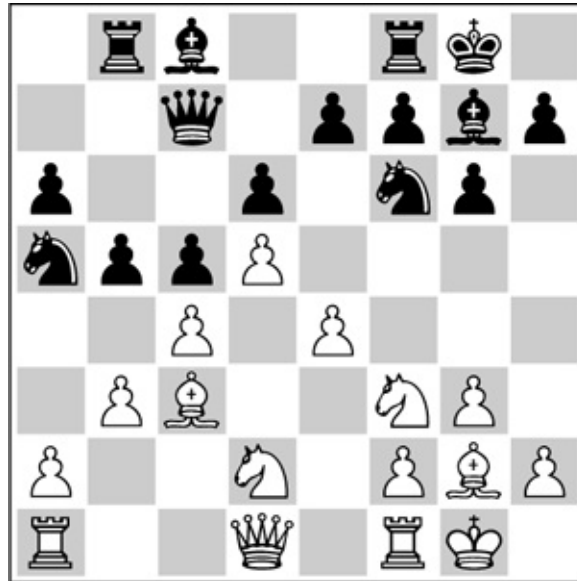
Option B) was correct. Of course, White strengthens his central position further.

With this move he also increases his space advantage.

11.cxb5 is not the right way. Black will now have a majority on the queenside which is quite mobile.

11.Bc3 is not immediately necessary, but it's not a bad move.

**11...Rb8 12.Bc3 Qc7**



Black's last move was a little dubious, and White can exploit this.

Question 3: Do you see how? Choose from:

A) 13.Rc1

B) 13.Qc2

C) 13.e5.

**13.e5**

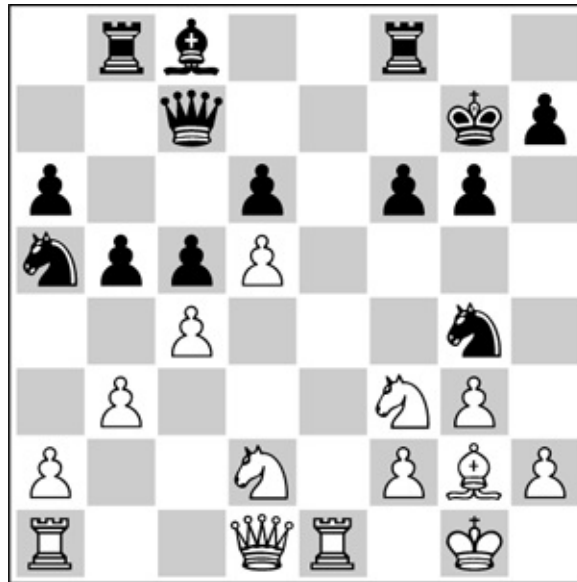
Answer to Question 3:

The right continuation was C). Since Black cannot take on e5 as this would lose the exchange, White does not lose time with this thematic push.

13.Rc1 – here the rook seems to stand nicely, but in fact it does very little. If White gets his way, the c-file will never be opened, as then he would abandon his beautiful central position.

13.Qc2 is a useful developing move, but 13.e5 is a more powerful possibility.

**13...Ng4 14.exd6 exd6 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.Re1 f6**



The black king position suffers from a certain ‘decay’, and the question is how White can put the focus on this in a clever way.

Question 4: How? Choose from:

- A) 17.Qc1
- B) 17.Qe2
- C) 17.Bh3.

**17.Qc1!**

Answer to Question 4:

If you have chosen A), you have hit the bull’s eye. The queen is heading for the beautiful square c3, which will yield him three advantages:

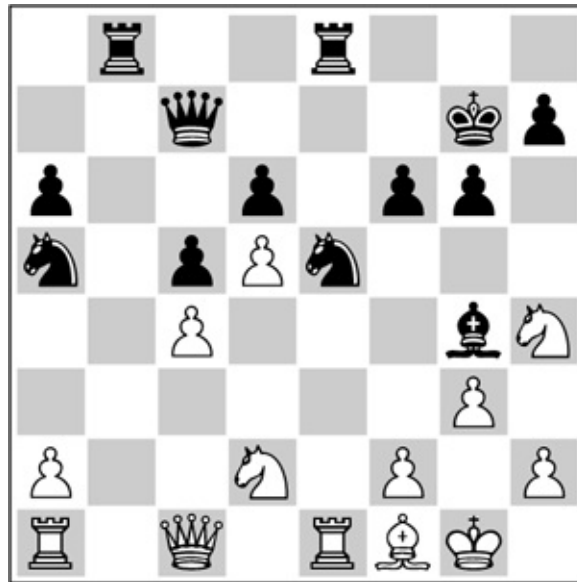
- 1) The a1-h8 diagonal is taken into possession;
- 2) The knight on a5 comes under fire;
- 3) The pawn on c4 gets extra protection.

17.Qe2 – the e-file is an important file, but it’s better for White to go about this in another way.

17.Bh3 is positionally sound (White would like to exchange the light-squared bishops, in order to weaken the square e6), but it fails tactically to 17...Nxf2.

**17...Ne5 18.Bf1 Bg4 19.Nh4 bxc4 20.bxc4 Rfe8**





Black has been fighting back for the last few moves, but now White can take over the initiative again.

#### Question 5: How?

**21.f4!**

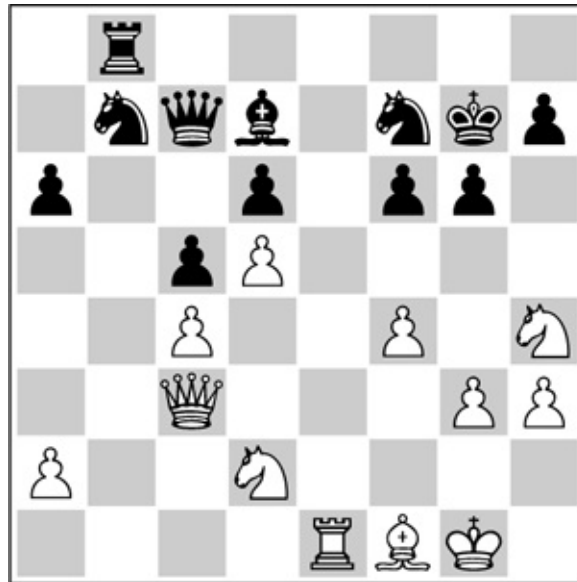
Answer to Question 5:

21.f4! is obvious, but strong. The black knight was a nuisance on e5, and now it is kicked back.

**21...Nf7 22.Qc3 Rxe1?!**

Abandoning this file does not exactly help Black's cause.

**23.Rxe1 Nb7 24.h3Bd7**



**Question 6:** How can White increase the pressure?

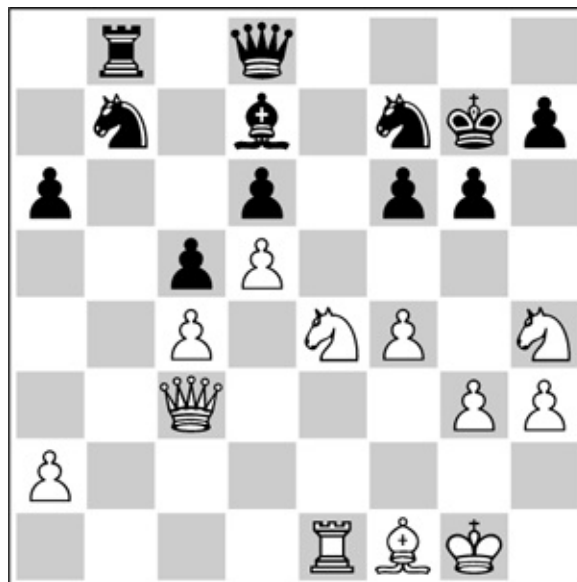
**25.Ne4!**

Answer to Question 6:

This was bound to be the right approach.

The weak point f6 is attacked, and the problems are mounting for the black player.

**25...Qd8**



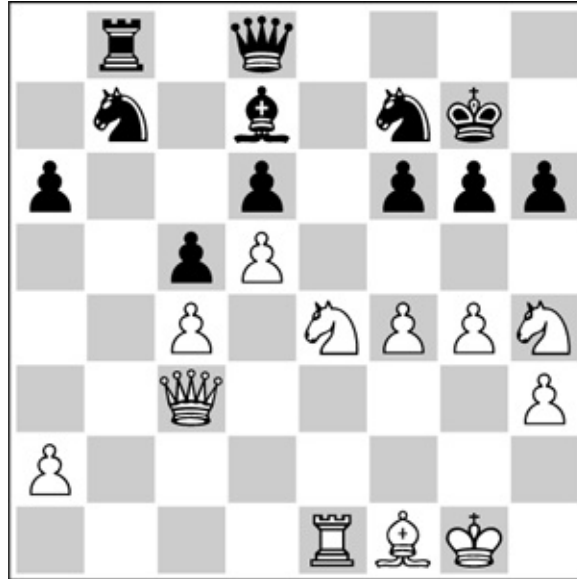
**Question 7:** But how can White make progress now?

**26.g4!**

Answer to Question 7:

Excellent. Now the strong threat is 27.g5, after which White breaks through.

**26...h6**



**Question 8:** The weaknesses in Black's position are ripe, but how should White attack them? Choose from:

- A) 27.Ng3
- B) 27.f5
- C) 27.Bd3.

**27.Bd3!**

Answer to Question 8:

If you have marked C), your positional feeling is excellent. With this good move White takes aim at a new weakness: the pawn on g6, which can hardly be protected.

There might have been an even better move. The possibility of 27.g5!! wasn't mentioned as one of the alternatives, but this is probably the most direct way to unhorse Black. After 27...hxg5 28.fxg5 Ne5 29.Nxf6, Black will not hold for much longer.

27.f5?! is not the right way. Black will now obtain control of the e5-square and then the worst will be behind him.

A good idea is 27.Ng3!?, but this idea can be refined. After 27.Ng3!?, Black can struggle on with 27...Qa5 28.Qa1 (to maintain the queen on the long diagonal. Inconsistent, but nonetheless probably stronger, is 28.Qc1!, when the threats on

the kingside will become too much for Black) 28...Qd2, and the invasion of the black queen somewhat disturbs White's attacking plans.

27...g5



The game is slowly heading for a climax. The black king position is shaking to its foundations.

**Question 9:** How can White make a hole in it? Choose from:

- A) 28.fxg5
- B) 28.Ng3
- C) 28.Nxf6.

**28.Ng3!**

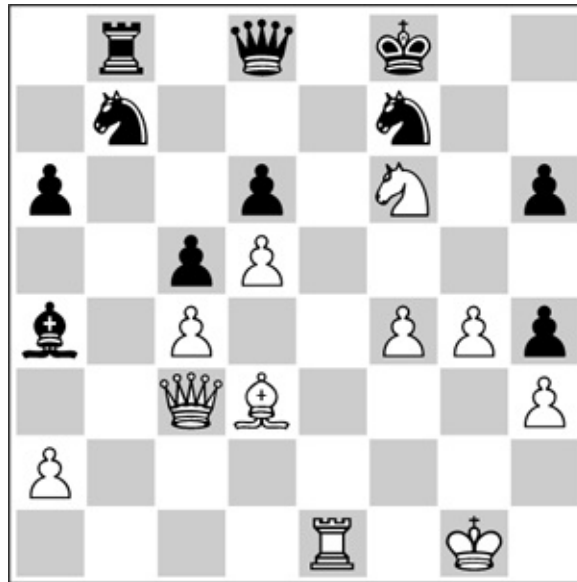
Answer to Question 9:

The piece sacrifice under B) is wonderful! White gives a piece in order to gain control of the weak point f6. After that, the remaining white pieces will intervene decisively.

28.fxg5 is not the most adequate attacking continuation as, with it, White abandons the square e5.

28.Nxf6? is a mistake. The sacrifice can be accepted by Black with impunity.

**28...gxh4 29.Nh5+ Kf8 30.Nxf6 Ba4**



The protective pawn layer around the black king has been blown away.

**Question 10:** How does White finish the job?

**31.Nh5!**

Answer to Question 10: Of course. Mate is threatened, and it cannot be averted in a satisfactory way.

**31...Ne5 32.fxe5**

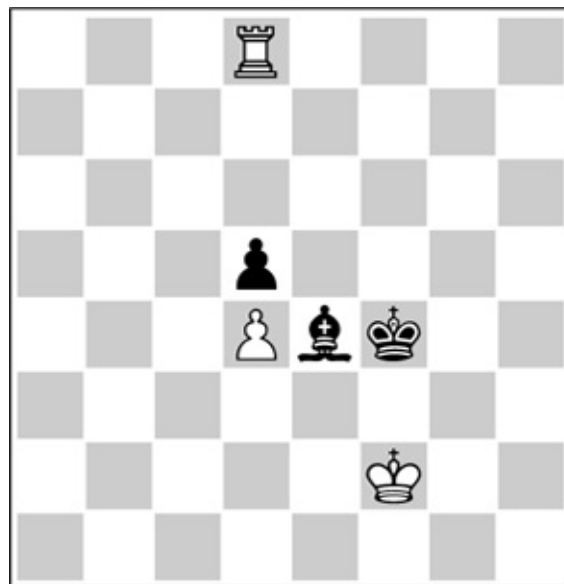
**1-0**

## Chapter 24

## Solutions

### Solutions to Chapter 4

4.1



In order to win, White must conquer the d5 pawn and then push his pawn forward, to force Black to give his bishop for this pawn. An important aspect of White's plan is that if he takes on d5, he needs to be sure that the pawn ending is winning for him. This is only possible if he forces the black king to the edge of the board.

Prior to this, White will try to play his king to the centre, in order to approach closer to the enemy pawn. There are various roads that lead to Rome. For example, the white king can walk to the c5-square via f2-e2-d2-c3-b4-c5. If then Black meets the move Kd2-c3 with ...Kf4-e3, White pins the bishop, forcing the black king to leave the e3-square again, after which he can continue his king march to c5.

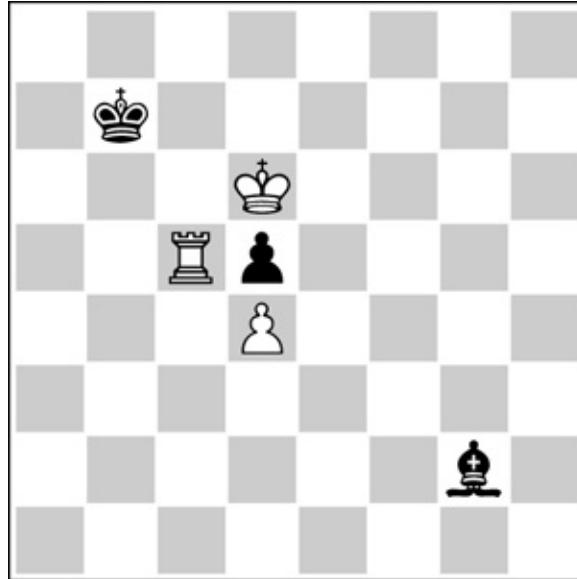
**1.Ke2 Bf3+ 2.Kd3 Be4+ 3.Kc3 Ke3 4.Re8 Kf4 5.Kb4 Ke3 6.Kc5 Kf4 7.Rd8 Kf5 8.Rxd5+ Bxd5 9.Kxd5**

**1-0**

Another method is to cut off the black king horizontally, trying to drive it backwards. Here, White makes use of tempo play to reach e5. The following

example shows the instructiveness of this method:

**1.Rh8 Bf5 2.Rh4+ Bg4 3.Kg2 Kg5 4.Kg3 Bf5 5.Rh8 Bg6 6.Rf8 Be4 7.Re8  
Kf6 8.Kf4 Bg2 9.Ra8 Kf7 10.Ke5 Be4 11.Ra7+ Ke8 12.Ke6 Kd8 13.Kd6 Kc8  
14.Ra8+ Kb7 15.Rg8 Bf3 16.Rg3 Be4 17.Rc3 Bg2 18.Rc5**



Analysis diagram

The plan has succeeded. White concludes the winning process with 19.Rxd5. One reader, Mark Huizer, pointed out an even simpler win to me: putting the rook on e5 so that the black king cannot cross the fifth rank, then bringing the white king to c5 and ‘sacrificing’ on d5.

A sample line:

**1.Re8 Bf5 2.Re5 Be4 3.Ke2 Bf3+ 3.Kd2 Be4 4.Kc3 Ke3 5.Re7! Kf4 6.Kb4  
Kf5 7.Kc5 Kf6 8. Re5**

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## 4.2 Vilner, Yakov

Romanovsky, Petr

Moscow ch-URS 1924 (7)



If you have concluded that Black has the better prospects, you are correct. Although the material is balanced, one piece isn't the same as the other. Black is better because he can give his bishop a bright future on the square d4. On the other hand, the white bishop is boxed in by its own pawns, and is therefore reduced to being an onlooker.

The black plan runs as follows:

- 1) The bishop is played to d4, after which he continues ...c6-c5 in order to fortify the position of this piece;
- 2) Next, preparations are made to open the f-file with the push...f7-f6;
- 3) After this, Black mounts pressure on the f2- or f3-point via the f-file;
- 4) If all this works out, the major pieces can invade the second rank via the f-file, after which a mating attack can be organized.

In the game the various steps of this plan were carried out perfectly:

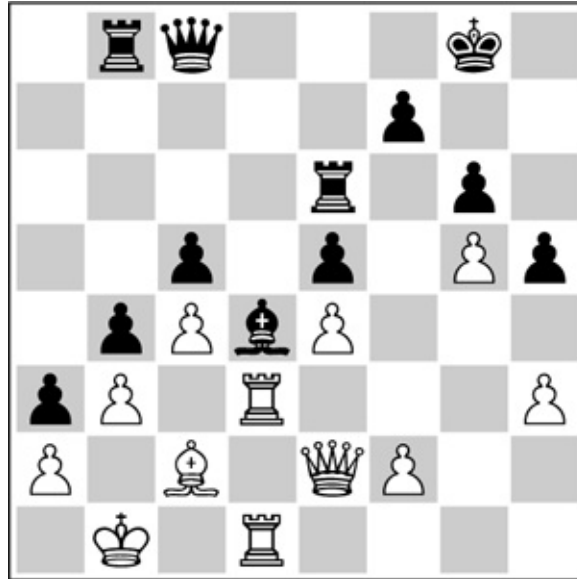
**1...Bf8**

**Stage 1:** Neutralization of the pressure along the d-file, by playing the bishop to d4.

**2.Rhd1 Bc5 3.Qe2 Bd4 4.Kb1 c5**

**Stage 2:** Preparation for the opening of the f-file.



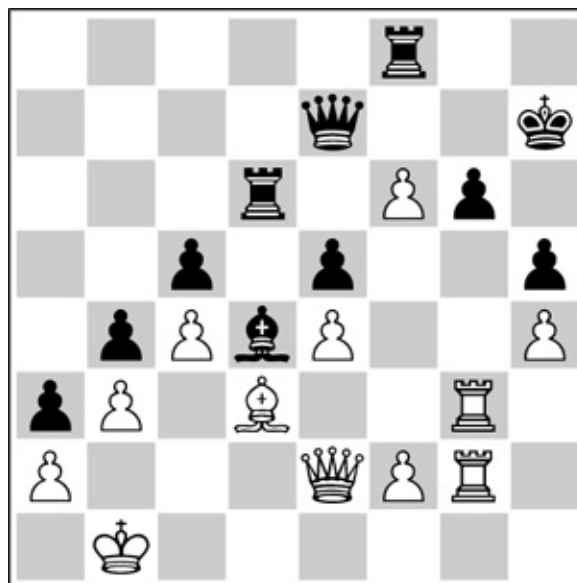


**5.Rf3 Qd8 6.h4 Qe7 7.Rg1 Rf8 8.Bd3 Kh7 9.Rfg3 Rd6 10.R1 g2 f6!**

Here's the half-time score:

White is not able to prevent Black's concentration of troops along the f-file. In particular, the f2-point will soon be exposed.

**11.gxf6**



**Stage 3:** Exerting pressure along the f-file, or on the weak h4 pawn.

**11...Rxf6!**

In the following, Black wants to increase the pressure by playing ...Rf4, and therefore the g6-point has to be Over-protected'.

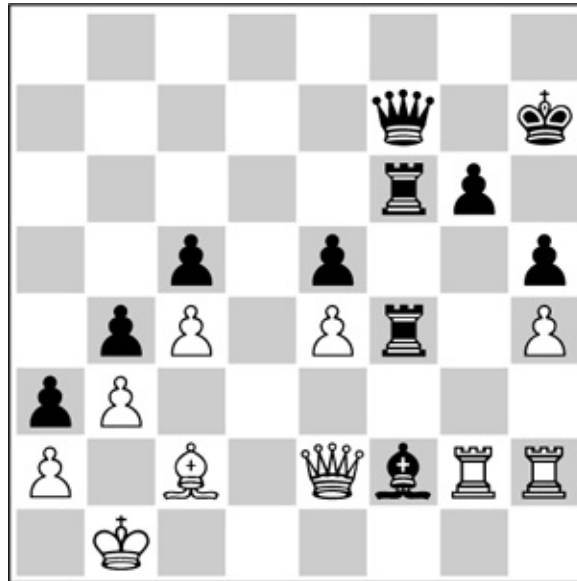
11...Rdxf6 looks more logical, but then White has a tactical trick: 12.f4! exf4 (or 12...Rxf4 13.Rxg6 Rxf6 14.Qxh5+

and White wins, since 14...Rh6 fails to 15.e5+.

### **12.Rg5**

Or 12.Rf3 Qf8 13.Rxf6 Rxf6, and Black has obtained the pressure along the f-file that he had in mind.

**12...Qf7 13.Bc2 Rf4 14.Rh2 Rdf6 15.Rgg2 Bxf2**



**Stage 4:** White's weak point has vanished. Obviously, Black takes with the bishop, as in this way he keeps as many major pieces on the board as possible. The black pieces will invade along the f-file as from now, after which dangers will soon arise for the white king.

**16.Bd1 Bd4 17.Kc1 Rf1**

17...Bb2+ also wins: 18.Kc2 (18.KM Rf1-+) 18...Rf3 19.Qd2 Rc3+ 20.KM Rd6!.

**18.Kc2 R6f3 19.Qd2 Rc3+ 20.Kb1 Qf3 21.Re2**



**21...Rxb3+!**

The final offensive. White is lost.

22.axb3Qxb3+23.Kc1 Bb2+

**Back**

**0-1**

4.3

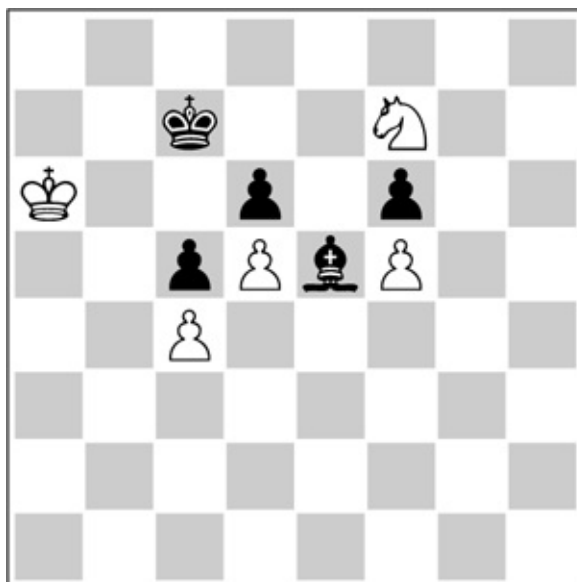


This is a typical case where the knight is superior to the bishop. The knight can stroll through the position, whereas the bishop is utterly powerless. White must drive away the black king in order to enable his own king to walk in. The eventual goal is to conquer the c6-square for his own king, so that the pawn on d6 can be collected.

**1.Nf3**

**Stage 1:** First the black king must be driven away from the square b7. For this purpose, the knight is played to c6, from where it threatens to go to a5 or d8. Assuming that the black bishop is on the a5-e1 diagonal to prevent Na5+, there follows Nd8+ Kc7, after which White plays Nf7!. Then the pawn on d6 will be hanging as soon as Black again plays ...Kb7, enabling White to gain ground with his king.

**1...Bc3 2.Nh4 Bd2 3.Ng6 Bh6 4.Ne7 Bd2 5.Nc6 Bc3 6.Nd8+ Kc7 7.Nf7! Be5 8.Ka6**

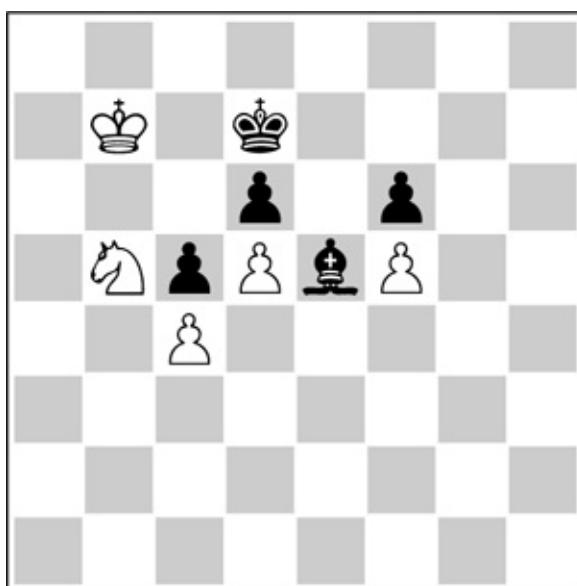


**Stage 2:** Now the black king must be driven away from the c7-square by playing the knight to the square b5.

**8...Bf4 9.Nh8! Be3 10.Ng6 Bh6 11.Ne7 Bf4 12.Nc6 Be5 13.Na7 Bf4 14.Nb5+ Kc8 15.Kb6 Kd7**

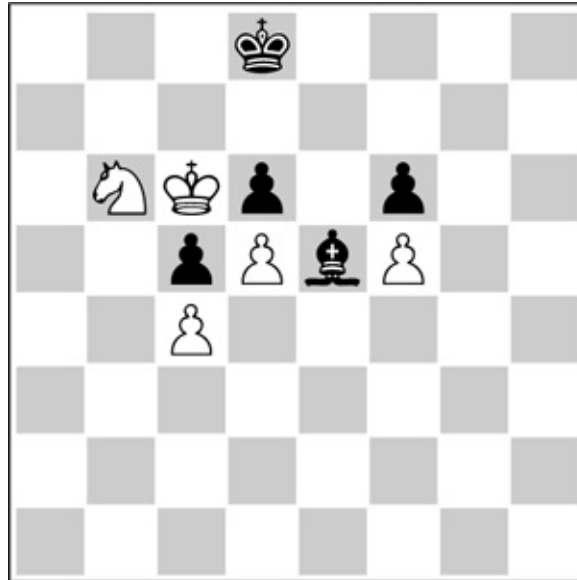
This is necessary, as otherwise White can immediately play 16.Kc6, which is the purpose of all his actions.

**16.Kb7 Be5**



**Stage 3:** The black king must now be chased away from the d7-square by a check on b6 or b8. So the knight must be played to c8 or c6. Please note that White can play Nb6+, even if the knight can be captured by the bishop there, since the resulting pawn ending is an easy win.

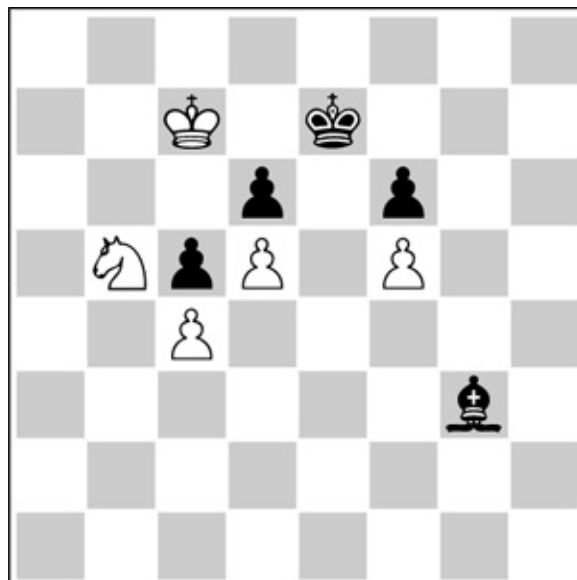
**17.Na7 Bc3 18.Nc8 Be5 19.Nb6+ Ke7**  
**19...Kd8 20.Kc6 Bg3 21.Nd7 Ke7 22.Kc7 Bf4 23.Nb6.**  
**20.Kc6 Kd8!**



Black does not cooperate. White was ready to play 21.Nc8+, but now he still has some work to do.

**Stage 4:** The knight must attack the d6 pawn from the square b5, forcing ...Ke7. After that, Kc7 can follow, ruling out ...Kd8.

**21.Na8! Bh2 22.Nc7 Bg3 23.Nb5 Ke7 24.Kc7**



**Stage 5:** The black king must be driven away from the protection of the d6 pawn by means of a check on c8.

**24...Be1 25.Na7! Bg3 26.Nc8+ Ke8 27.Kc6!**

Of course not 27.Nxd6?? on account of 27...Ke7, winning a piece, and all White's work would have been for nothing.

**27...Kd8 28.Nxd6**

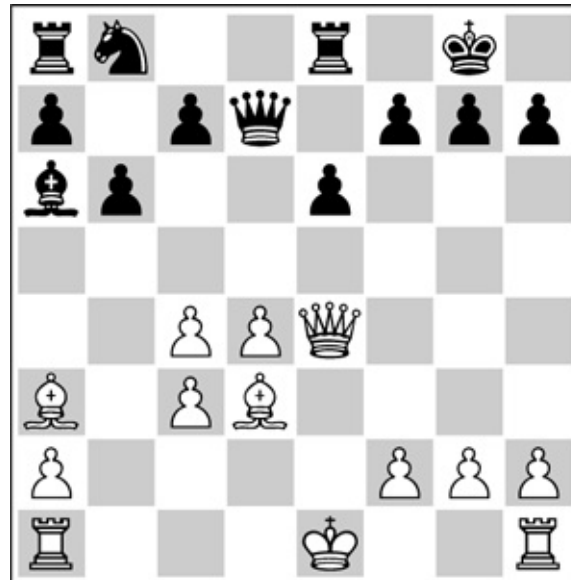
And the black pawns are falling like ripe apples.

This is an example of a position that is much better solved by humans than by computers. Even the strongest chess engines are not capable of giving a correct evaluation of the starting position. Only after a large number of moves have been played, according to the systematic winning plan, does the computer's evaluation rise.

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#### 4.4 Portisch,Lajos Fischer,Robert

Santa Monica 1966 (11)



The simplification where Black ‘gives up’ two rooks for a queen should be assessed as favourable for Black. The reason is that the queen cooperates well with its minor pieces, whereas the rooks find little employment in this closed position. Additionally, White is struggling with problems with his queenside pawn structure. The pawns on a2, and especially c4, are very vulnerable.

**13...f5!**

This is a strong move, with which Black seizes the initiative.

**14.Qxa8?**

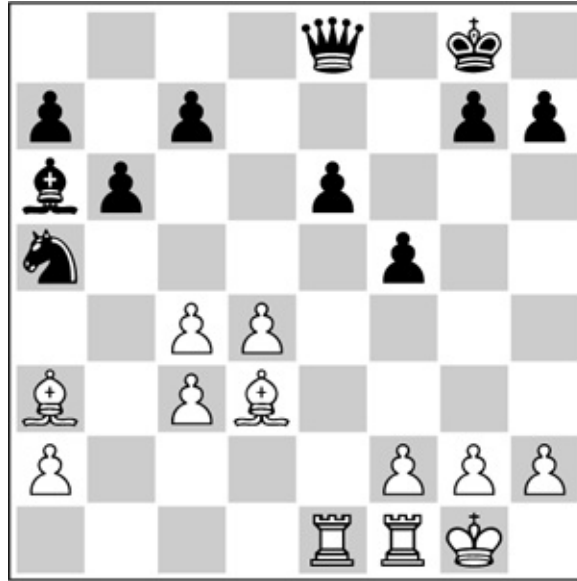
White ‘over-indulges’ in the black rooks. After 14.Qe2 the damage would have been limited for White, although after 14...Nc6 15.0-0 e5 Black already has comfortable play. After, for example, 16.d5? e4 17.Bc2 Na5, the white army is already in complete disarray.

**14...Nc6 15.Qxe8+ Qxe8 16.0-0 Na5**

This was the actual intention of the entire simplification. Black has seen correctly that he will win the vulnerable pawn on c4, and this will also yield him a closed position where his queen + knight are better than the two rooks + bishop.

**17.Rae1**





### 17...Bxc4

Obviously Black captures with the bishop, after which he is left with a good knight versus a bad bishop. Fischer himself indicates that there was an even better liquidation: 17...Qa4! 18.Bb4 (18.Bc1 Bxc4 19.Bxc4 Qxc4-+) 18...Bxc4 19.Bxc4 Nxc4 20.Rxe6 a5 21.Be7 Nd2! 22.Rfe1 Ne4 23.f3 Qxa2!, and Black is winning.

### 18.Bxc4

Not 18.Bxf5? in view of 18...Qa4.

### 18...Nxc4 19.Bc1

As noted earlier, now Black has, apart from an extra pawn, also the large advantage of a strong knight versus a bad bishop. In particular, the light squares in the white camp are extremely vulnerable.

### 19...c5

Another plan is 19...Nd6, with the intention to take aim at the weak white pawns (c3 and a2) with the queen and knight.

### 20.dxc5

20.d5? is met by 20...e5.

### 20...bxc5 21.Bf4 h6! 22.Re2

After 22.h4 Black gets a winning position with 22...e5! 23.Bxe5 Nxe5. It is essential that 24.f4 fails to 24...Nf3+! 25.gxf3 Qa4, and now Fischer indicates that White's many weak pawns (a2, c3, f4 and h4) will be a source of worry for him.

### 22...g5 23.Be5?

The bishop is doing practically nothing here. Portisch indicates that he should have played 23.Be3!?. After 23...Qb5 24.f3 (24.f4? Nd6, with the idea 25...

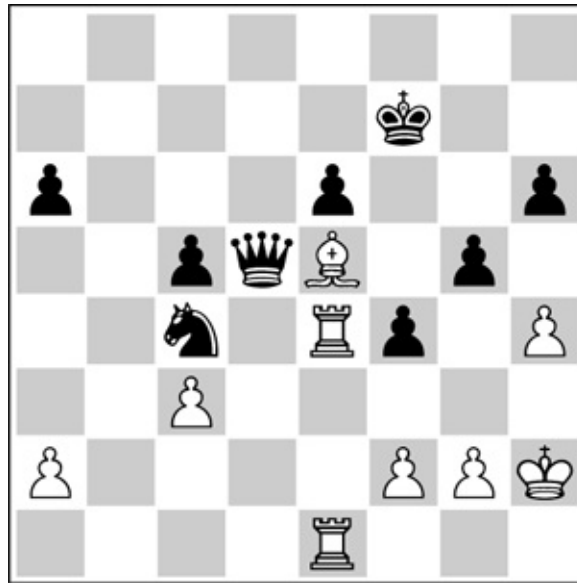
Ne4) 24...e5 25.Bf2, intending Re1, he claims that White is OK, but after 25... Kf7 I think that Black still has excellent prospects.

**23...Qd8 24.Rfe1**

24.f4 is met by 24...Nd2! 25.Rfe1 Ne4, as indicated by Fischer.

**24...Kf7 25.h3 f4 26.Kh2 a6 27.Re4 Qd5! 28.h4**

28.R4e2 runs into 28...f3! 29.gxf3 (29.Re4 fxg2, with the idea ...Nd2) 29... Nd2, winning, as Fischer also demonstrates.



**28...Ne3!?**

A beautiful interference, with which Black wins an exchange. However, even stronger was 28...Nd2!, which after 29.R4e2 leads to a position where Black tears apart the entire white king's position with 29...f3! 30.Re3 fxg2, when material loss cannot be avoided.

**29.R1xe3**

Even worse is 29.f3 Qd2 30.Rg1 Qf2, and Fischer indicates that this even ends in a forced mate.

**29...fxe3 30.Rxe3 Qxa2**

And the rest is technique, as they say—something which can be left to Fischer.

**31.Rf3+**

After 31.f3 Qf2 32.Re4 gxh4, White could pack it in as well.

**31...Ke8 32.Bg7 Qc4 33.hxg5**

Also important is that 33.Bxh6 fails to 33...Qxh4+ 34.Rh3 Qxf2 35.Bxg5 a5, and the pawn cannot be stopped by normal means.

**33...hxg5 34.Rf8+ Kd7 35.Ra8 Kc6 0-1**

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## Solutions to Chapter 5

### 5.1 Smyslov,Vasily Gereben,Ernö

Budapest-Moscow 1949



In this game White lashed out with:

**17.Rxf6! gxf6**

After 17...Bxf6 18.Bh7+ Kh8 19.Nexf7+, Black is also finished.

**18.Qh5**

Now that the king position has been torn apart, White invests even more material. Oddly enough, 18.Bh7+ was even stronger. After 18...Kg7, White also blasts his way through the black king's position with 19.Ngxf7!, for instance: 19...Rxf7 20.Qg4+ Kh8 21.Nxf7+, and too much material drops off Black's side of the board.

**18...fxg5 19.Qxh6 f5 20.Qg6+ Kh8 21.hxg5!**

Now the threats are both 22.Ke2, followed by 23.Rh1+, and 22.Qh6+ Kg8 23.g6, with unavoidable mate.

**21...Bxa3 22.Ke2 Qd5 23.Nf3!**

And Black gave up the fight.

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## 5.2 Kosten,Anthony Berg,Klaus

Naestved 1988 (2)



After the rather greedy

**22...Nxb4?**

White quickly managed to exploit the weak dark squares in the neighbourhood of the black king. 22...Nc7 should have been preferred, but also then Black would not have had much to hope for. There followed:

**23.Ne7+Kg7**

23...Kh8 is met by 24.Qc3+ f6 25.Re6, winning.

**24.Qc3+**

Here the intention of White's 22.b4 becomes clear. Now Black cannot play 24...Qf6, as then his knight on b4 is hanging.

**24...Kh6**

After 24...f6 25.Re6 Nxd5 26.Rxd6 Nxc3 27.Rxd7, it is all over as well.

**25.Nxf5+!**

A pretty sacrifice, which underlines the vulnerability of the black king.

**25...gxf5 26.Re6+!**

To top it all off, a beautiful interference combination, after which Black resigned. After 26...fxe6 27.Qf6+ it is mate.

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# St Petersburg 1909



In this position there followed the exceptionally strong  
**30.Re6! Rxe6**

It is clear that Black gets mated after 30...fxe6 31.Qxh6+.

### 31.dxe6 d5

Black cannot defend well against the combined attack of the white pieces.

Perhaps, 31...Ra1+ 32.Kh2 Ke8 was a little more tenacious, but then also, 33.Qxh6 would have been very strong.

**32.Qxh6+ Ke8 33.exf7+ Kxf7 34.Qh7+ Ke6 35.Qxg6**

White has won material, while the black king remains unsafe. No wonder that Black's resistance is broken fairly quickly.

**35...Ra7 36.b4cxb4**

Here 36...Qb8 is objectively better, but Black is lost anyway.

37.Nd4+Kd7 38.Bf5+

As Black will suffer more material losses.

**1-0**

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#### 5.4 Laznicka,Viktor Ponomariov,Ruslan

Karlovy Vary 2007 (7)



The exchange sacrifice

**22...Rxc3!**

is fully justified.

**23.bxc3Na4!**

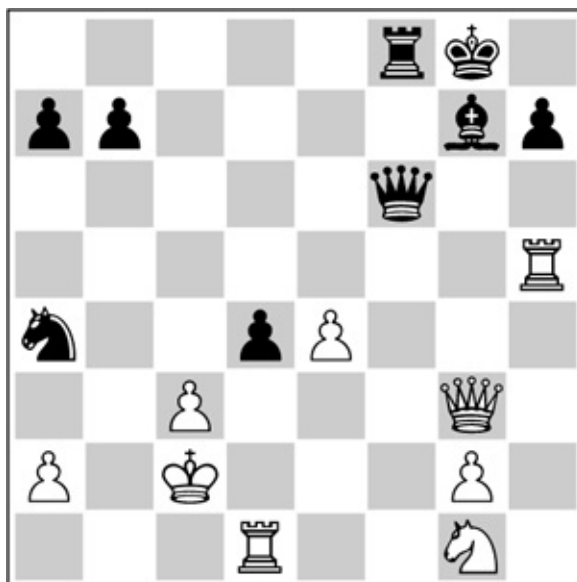
But Black had to take this move into account in his decision. Obviously, the intention is to enable a queen switch to the queenside.

**24.Bxd4**

24.cxd4 fails to 24...Qb6+ 25.Kc2 Qb2+ 26.Kd3 Rc8, and the threats are too much for White to handle.

**24...exd4 25.Kc2**

25.cxd4 is met by 25...Qb6+ 26.Qb3+ Qxb3+ 27.axb3 Nc3+ 28.Kc2 Nxd1 29.Kxd1 Rf1+, after which the endgame will not be too much of a problem.



**25...Qf7?!**

Black neglects to reap the harvest immediately. Preferable was the multifunctional move 25...Qb6! 26.R.M, and now the unexpected but also very attractive 26...Rf2+! 27.Qxf2 d3+, after which Black wins easily.

**26.Rxd4?**

With this new mistake White gives his opponent free passage. With 26.Rd5, he could have made things more difficult for his opponent. Only with 'powerplay' can the white king position be wrenched out of joint: 26...Nxc3 27.R1xd4 Nxd5 28.Rxd5 Qf1! 29.Nf3 Rc8+ 30.Kd2 Kh8!, and now the bishop is also fully involved in the attack.

**26...Qxa2+ 27.Kd3 Qb1+ 28.Kd2 Qb2+**

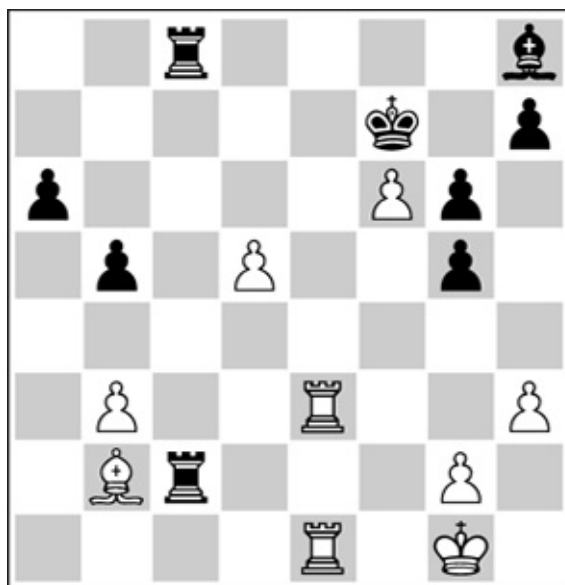
And here the white player had seen enough.

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## Solutions to Chapter 6

### 6.1 Zysk,Robert Kettner,Jürgen

Germany Bundesliga 1986/87



The white passed pawn on f6 will make things happen in this position.

**38.Re7+ Kf8**

After 38...Kg8 it's a forced mate: 39.f7+ Kf8 40.Re8+ Kxf7 41.R1e7#.

**39.Rxh7Kg8**

After 39...Rxb2 40.Rxh8+ Kf7 41.Rxc8, White will be a rook up.

**40.Rxh8+!**

With this attractive combination he makes optimal use of his passed pawn.

**40...Kxh8 41.Re8+! Kh7 42.f7**

And Black resigned.

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**6.2 Kasparov, Garry**  
**Browne, Walter**  
 Banja Luka 1979 (3)



**29.Ne5!**

White chooses the right strategy. The pawn on d6 may become weak, but after the exchange of blockaders it can also be employed as an attacking weapon.

**29...Nb4**

29...Nxe5 30.Bxe5 c4 31.Qd2! (this way White places the queen behind the passed pawn. Less good is 31.d7 Bxd7 32.Bxb8 Qxb8, and Black has compensation for the lost material) 31...Nb6 (31...Be6 32.Bg2 Nb6 33.Ra7, and the white attack gains in strength) 32.Bc3! is again the most powerful continuation. Not only does White threaten to set up a dangerous battery against the black king now with 33.Qd4, with the coming rook exchange he will also eliminate another blockading piece.

**30.Qd2 Nxe5 31.Rxe5**

White wants to clear away as many blockading pieces as possible.

**31 ...Rxe5 32.Bxe5 Nc6 33.Qe3**

Also interesting was 33.f4.

**33...Nxe5 34.Qxe5 c4 35.Bg2 Be6 36.Ra7**

Kasparov systematically places his last two pieces in position. Due to the strong passed pawn – which ties Black's pieces hand and foot – and Black's weakened king position, Black's collapse is imminent.

**36...b4**

Browne puts all his money on his own potential passed pawn. Possible was 36...Qf8, in order to protect his king position. But then White will decide the issue

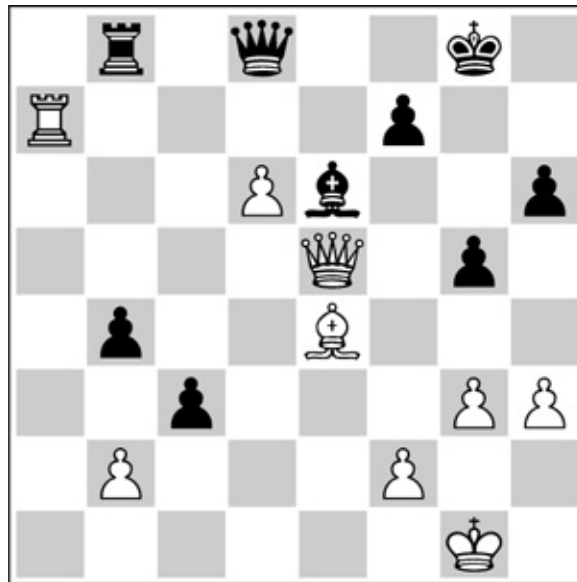
with his passed pawn. An essential variation is: 37.Bd5 Bxd5 38.Qxd5 Rd8 39.d7, and Black can prevent neither further material loss, nor Whites plan to promote his pawn.

### **37.Be4!**

With this move, Kasparov introduces a magnificent tactical motif into the position, which is not noticed by Browne.

### **37...c3**

Here, 37...Bd7 was the only move, but then White would also keep the upper hand with 38.Bd5.



### **38.Bh7+!**

Well-spotted.

### **38...Kxh7**

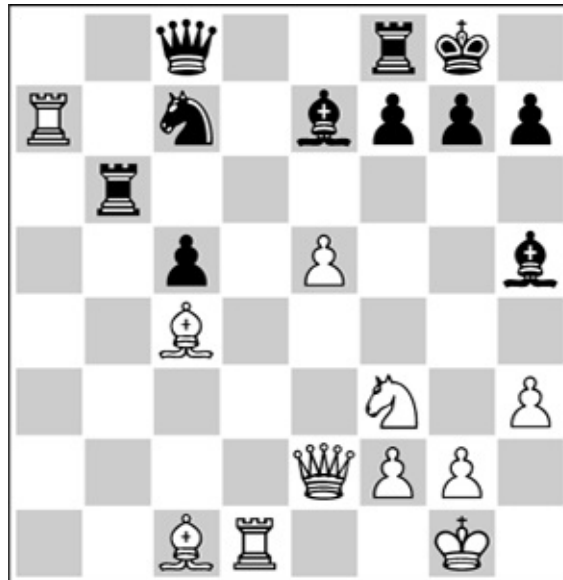
Otherwise he will be mated.

### **39.Qxe6**

And Black had to pack it in due to the weakness of the seventh rank.

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**6.3 Chandler,Murray  
Olafsson,Helgi**  
Hastings 1990 (8)



**23.e6!**

With this move White creates a potential passed pawn. The combination is based on a line clearance.

**23...Bf6**

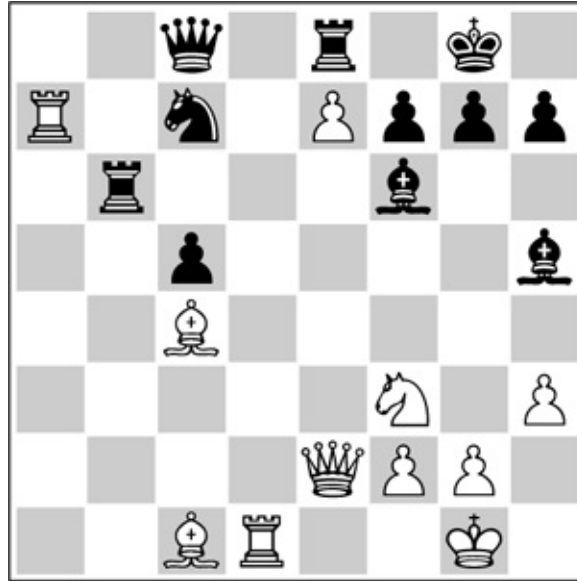
The most tenacious continuation, but now White can set his passed pawn in motion!

On 23...fxe6 there would follow 24.Qe5! with a double attack, since both the knight on c7 and the bishop on h5 are hanging.

The move 23...Nxe6 is out of the question in view of 24.g4! (less convincing is 24.Rxe7 on account of 24...Nd4 25.Rxd4 (25.Qe3 Nf3+ 26.gxf3 Qxh3 and suddenly Black has a dangerous initiative. The threat of 27...Rg6+ can no longer be parried satisfactorily) 25...cxd4 and White has the better chances, but nothing is decided yet) 24...Bg6 25.Rxe7 with decisive material gain for White.

It is essential that after 23...Bd6 24.g4! Bg6 25.exf7+ Bxf7 (25...Kh8 26.Ne5 Qb8 27.Nxg6+ hxg6 28.g5! Qxa7 29.Qg4 and White has set up a mating attack) 26.Ng5! Bxc4 27.Qxc4+ Kh8 28.Qc2! g6 29.Bb2+ White has again built up a decisive attack on the king.

**24.e7! Re8**



**25.Rd8!+-**

And this move is the apotheosis of a sharply played middlegame.

**25...Rxd8 26.Rxc7!**

The point of the combination. The weakness of his back rank will be Black's downfall.

**26...Qb8**

26...Qxc7 27.e8Q+ Rxe8 28.Qxe8X.

**27.exd8Q+Qxd8**

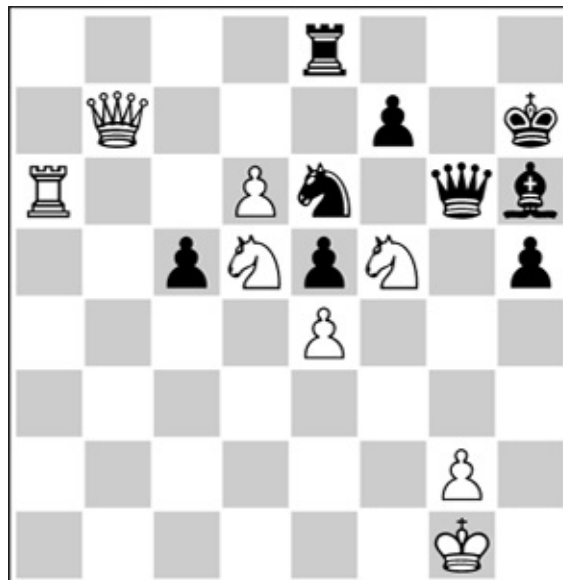
White has won a piece, and the rest is easy.

**28.Bf4 g5 29.Bg3 Rb2 30.Qd3 Qa8 31.Qd7 Qa1+ 32.Kh2 Rb1 33.Bxf7+ Kh8**

**34.Qe8+ Kg7 35.Bg6+ 1-0**

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**6.4 Volkov,Sergey**  
**Nevednichy, Vladislav**  
 Plovdiv Ech 2008 (2)



**38.Qe7!!**

With this highly spectacular move the white passed pawn gains decisive importance.

Less convincing were 38.d7? Rd8, when the white pawn is quite securely blockaded, and 38.Ra7 Bg5 39.Qxf7+ Qxf7 40.Rxf7+ Kg6, and the game is anything but over.

**38...Rb8**

Obviously, 38...Rxe7 is not possible in view of 39.dxe7 Qg5 40.Ra1!, with which White prevents the inconveniences with ...Qc1+. The pawn promotion cannot be prevented anymore. 39...f6 also fails – to 40.e8Q Qxe8 41.Nxf6+. After 38...Rd8 39.d7 Bg5 40.Qe8, the queen turns up on the other side of the pawn, after which White will be able to demolish the last remains of Black's defences with Ra6-c6-c8.

**39.d7**

Also here, a big difference with the push of the passed pawn becomes clear. The queen is on the right side of the pawn. Not only is the blockader driven away, White has also created chances against the black king himself, while his queen is a good defender of its own king as well.

**39...Bf8**

39...Bg7 runs into 40.Ra3!, with the deadly threat of 41.Rg3.

**40.Rxe6**

White opts for the most forcing winning line. Also possible was 40.Qe8.

**40...Qxe6**

Also hopeless was 40...Bxe7 41.Rxg6 fxg6 42.Nfxe7, for example: 42...Rd8 43.Nc6Rxd7 44.Nf6+.

**41.d8Q**

Even more convincing was 41.Qh4.

**41...Rb1+ 42.Kh2Bxe7 43.Ndxe7 1-0**

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## Solutions to Chapter 7

### 7.1 Savchenko,Stanislav Sinanovic,Muhamed

Tuzla 1990 (2)



Black's last move, 14...Bd7?, allows a small combination, with which White can damage the enemy pawn structure. In the game, the strong continuation was:

**1.Nd5!**

Less convincing was 1.Bxf6?! Bxf6 2.Nd5 exd5 3.cxd5 Qb8 4.dxc6 bxc6, and Black has counterplay.

**1...exd5**

After 1...Qb8, 2.Nb6! is the most unpleasant continuation for Black (also after 2.Nxe7+ Nxe7 3.Bxf6 gxf6, Black will be left with a ruined pawn formation) 2...Ra7 3.c5 Nd5 (3...dxc5 fails to 4.Bxf6 Bxf6 5.Nxd7; and 3...d5 4.Bg3 e5 loses a pawn to 5.Nxd5) 4.Bxe7 Ncxe7 5.cxd6, and Black cannot take back on d6 in view of the pin.

**2.cxd5Qa5**

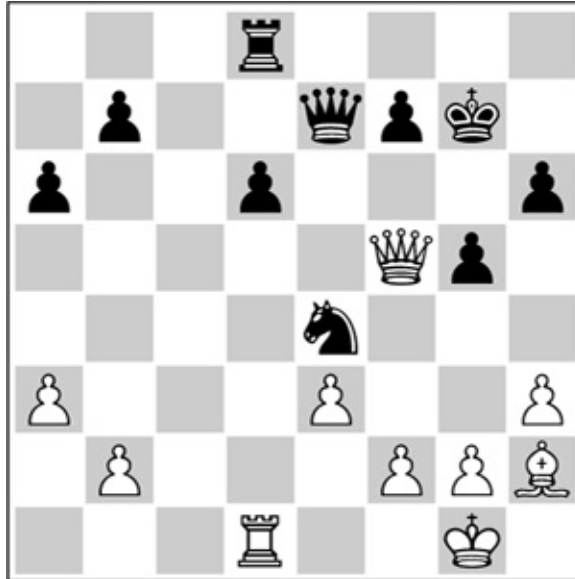
After 2...Nxd5 3.Rxd5 Bxh4 4.Nxh4 Be6 5.Rd2 Rac8, White would have the edge that he wanted. The pawn on d6 is weak, and he is left with the right pieces to put pressure on this pawn in the future.

**3.dxc6 Bxc6**

After the text move, Black is stuck with a weak pawn on d6, for which he has practically no compensation at all. After 3...bxc6, 4.Bxf6 Bxf6 will cost him a

pawn, and 4...gxf6 5.Rxd6 is just as bad. White managed to increase his advantage as follows:

**4.Nd4 Rac8 5.Nf5 Qe5 6.Nxe7+ Qxe7 7.h3 g5 8.Bg3 Ne4 9.Bh2 Bb5 10.Qxc8 Bxe2 11.Qf5 Bxd1 12.Rxd1 Kg7**



### **13.Rd4**

This is the first sign that the white player treats the position a little too light-heartedly. 13.Qd5 was much more logical here. The square in front of the pawn is blockaded, after which White can further increase the pressure.

### **13...Qc7 14.g4?!**

Only with the odd 14.Bf4! could White have maintained a large advantage.

### **14...Nc5?**

Black caves in under the pressure, after which the game is immediately over.

Black had a quite curious way out of this delicate situation at his disposal: 14... Re8 15.Rxe4 (what else?) 15...Qc1+ 16.Kg2 Qc6, and White cannot get out of this eternal pin: 17.Kf3 (after 17.f3 Qc2+ 18.Kg3 Qc1, Black draws by perpetual check) 17...Re6.

### **15.Bxd6!**

**1-0**

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7.2 Sozin,Veniamin  
Botvinnik,Mikhail  
Moscow ch-URS 1931



In order to make progress, White must try to open the position. In the game he considered that this was the right moment:

**1.f7! Rxf7 2.Rxd6+ Kxd6 3.Rxf7 Bxe3 4.Rf6+**

Even though the black king would become more active than in the game, 4.Kxe3 Kd5 5.Rxh7 would also have won here.

**4...Ke7 5.Kxe3 Ra8**

White has cleverly assessed that Black does not have the slightest chance in this rook ending. The weak pawn on e5 will perish soon, while Black must grimly keep protecting his other weaknesses on a6 and h7. In the game he tried to become active, but that didn't enable him to save the half-point either. The technical conclusion went as follows:

**6.Rb6 Kf7 7.Ke4 Rc8 8.Kxe5 Rc4 9.Rxa6 Rxh4 10.Ra7+ Kg8 11.Rc7 Rg4  
12.Kf6 Rf4+ 13.Ke6 Rf8 14.Rc5 Rb8 15.Kd6** **1-0**

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### 7.3 Petrosian, Tigran

5b6 38.c6!

Planinc, Albin

Ohrid tt 1972



The pawn on d6 is weak, and White eagerly points his arrows at it. Before concentrating on his own plan, he must seriously reckon with the annoying threat 1...g5 2.Bg3 Nxg3. In order to achieve a tangible advantage, White has to take control of the square in front of the weak pawn. During this process, the black knights are a thorn in White's side, but with his next move Petrosian manages to disturb the coordination between them.

**1.Nc6!**

Therefore, C) is the correct continuation. Moves like 1.Rc6 do not do anything against the positional threat of 1...g5 2.Bg3 Nxg3 3.fxg3 Nxe3, after which Black is certainly not worse.

Another plausible idea is 1.b4, but after 1...Rc7 White's advantage is only marginal. Now on 1...g5, White has 2.Ne2! Ndf6 3.Bg3, and he can play for square f5.

After 1.Ne2 Ndf6, Black will get round to ...d6-d5, after which his position remains playable.

**1...Ndf6 2.Bxf6!**

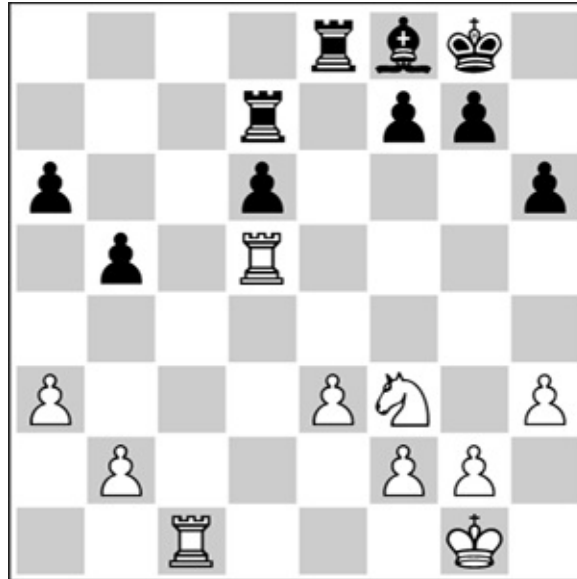
Petrosian was a great master when it came to exchanging the right pieces. By trading off a knight, Black loses a great deal of his activity.

**2...Nxf6 3.Nb4!**

The second intention behind the first move. Black cannot just give away the pawn on a6, and therefore he has to allow White to control the beautiful square

d5.

3...b5 4.Nd5 Qxd5 5.Qxd5 Nxd5 6.Rxd5



Apart from the advantage caused by the d-pawn weakness, White has obtained the advantage of good knight versus bad bishop. On top of this, he controls the open c-file, and therefore Black's collapse will not be long delayed. There followed:

**6...Rb7 7.Rc6 Ra8 8.Nd2 g6 9.Ne4 f5 10.Nxd6 Rd7 11.Ne4 Rxd5 12.Nf6+ Kf7 13.Nxd5 Rd8 14.Rc7+ Ke6 15.Nf4+ Kf6 16.g4 g5 17.Nh5+ Ke5 18.Ra7 Ke4 19.Kg2 f4 20.Nf6+ Kd3 21.exf4 gxf4 22.Rxa6 Rd6 23.Rxd6+ Bxd6 24.Nd5**

**1-0**

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## 7.4 Seirawan, Yasser Adams, Michael

Roquebrune rapid 1992 (21)



In this position, it is essential for White to get as firm a grip on square e5 as possible, keeping Black's weak pawn fixed on e6. That is why the knight must be repositioned.

In the game White carries out the above-mentioned plan with:

**1.Ne4! Bg7**

Black must not allow the exchange of his dark-squared bishop for the white knight, since then he could forget about ...e6-e5 forever.

**2.Nf2**

The knight strives for the beautiful square e5.

**2...Qe7**

To the direct 2...e5, White can react in two ways:

A) 3.dxe5?! Qe7 4.Nd3 (or 4.Rd4 Bf5, and the pawn will again fall into 'friendly' hands) 4...c6 5.Be4, and it will be quite a job to cash in on this extra pawn;

B) 3.d5! (the most promising continuation) 3...Bf5 4.Be4, and White has a firm grip on the e4-square, and he will be able to create a strong passed pawn. Black will have to do without counterplay.

**3.Nd3**

But now White is in time with his knight manoeuvre, so that he keeps pulling the strings.

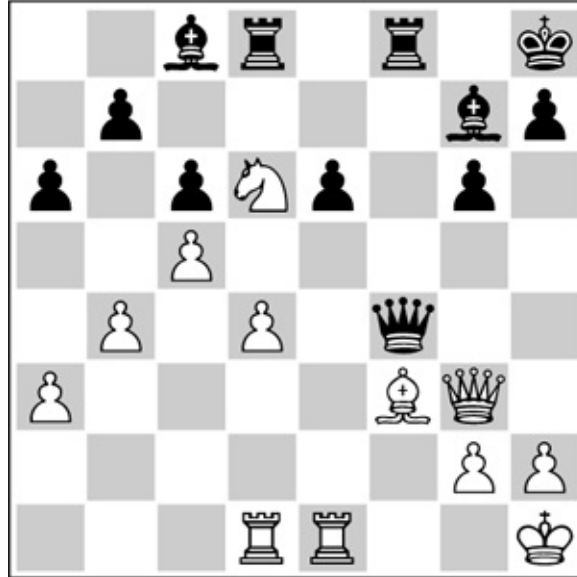
**3...c6 4.Ne5 Rd8 5.Nc4**

The white knight dances through the black position.

**5...Qh4 6.Nd6**

Now that the black pieces are no longer able to support the possible pawn push ...e6-e5, White is going for the win of a pawn.

**6...Bh6 7.Qe5+ Bg7 8.Qg3 Qf4**



**9.Re4! Qxg3 10.hxg3 Rxd6**

Sheer necessity, since there was no decent remedy for the white plan with Bf3-g4, after which the pawn on e6 is doomed.

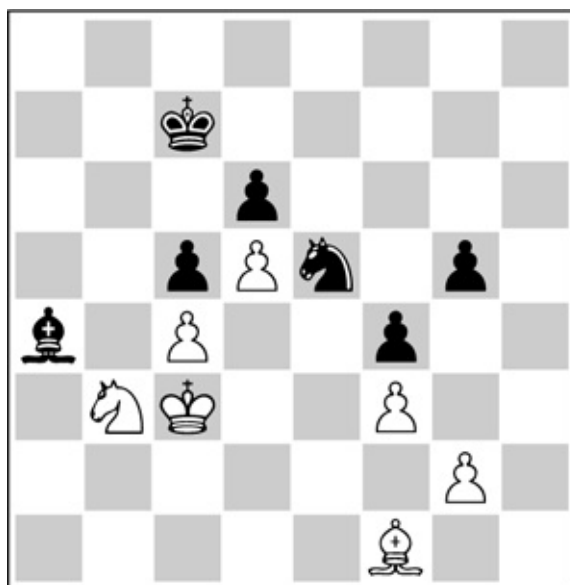
**11.cxd6 Rd8 12.Rde1 Rxd6 13.Bg4 Rd5 14.Bxe6 Bxe6 15.Rxe6 Bxd4 16.g4**

And White realized his advantage on the 78th move.

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## Solutions to Chapter 9

### 9.1 Filip, Miroslav Petrosian, Tigran Curacao ct 1962 (21)



Black liquidates to an endgame of good knight versus bad bishop. He can do this because he has a good winning plan.

**46...Bxb3 47.Kxb3 Kb6**

First the black king checks in on the queenside, trying to force an entry there. But Black's actual idea is not revealed until a little later.

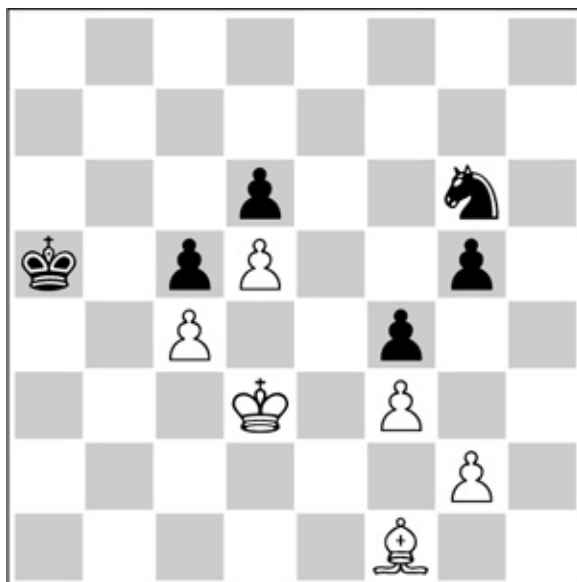
**48.Kc3**

If the white king does not budge and goes to a4, Black will play his other trump card – the plan he will also carry out in the game.

**48...Ng6!**

Laying his cards on the table. The knight is played via h4 and f5 to the beautiful square e3, where it will chase away the bishop, and then pawn g2 will disappear from the board.

**49.Kd3 Ka5**



Black combines play on the kingside with play on the queenside.

### **50.Kc3**

If White continues with 50.Ke4, Black replies 50...Nh4, putting White into zugzwang. If White then hopes for a race after 51.Be2, Black can win without risk by walking in with his own king: 51...Kb4 (certainly not 51...Nxb2? in view of 52.Kf5, which would prove White right as his king also enters with devastating force) 52.Bf1 Kc3 53.Be2 Kd2 54.Bf1 Ke1 55.Bd3 Kf2, and White can give up the fight.

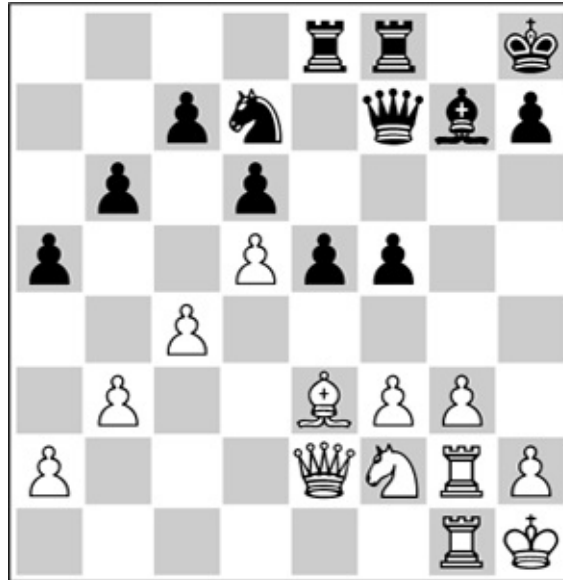
### **50...Nh4 51.Kb3 Nf5**

And Black wins a pawn, after which the point will be his. Filip didn't feel like being on the receiving end of a demonstration, of a variation like 51...Nf5 52.Bd3 Ne3 53.Be4 Nxb2 54.Bd3 Ne3 55.Be2 Nf5 56.Bd1 Nd4+ 57.Ka3 Kb6 58.Ka4 Ka6 59.Ka3 Ka5, when White loses by zugzwang.

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## 9.2 Ivanovjgor Gelfand,Boris

New York Open 1989 (6)



### 1.g4!

Thus, White succeeded in conquering the important square e4 for his pieces. Next, his plan consists of exchanging all the major pieces and occupying square e4 with the knight, and, possibly, with his king later on. In the endgame that then arises, White has excellent winning chances, which indeed he managed to convert into a win in the game. The continuation was:

**1...Rg8 2.gxf5 Qxf5 3.Ne4 Bf6 4.Rxg8+ Rxg8 5.Rxg8+ Kxg8 6.Qg2+ Kf7 7.Qg4 Qxg4 8.fxg4 Kg6 9.Kg2 Bh4 10.Kh3 Be7 11.g5 Bf8**

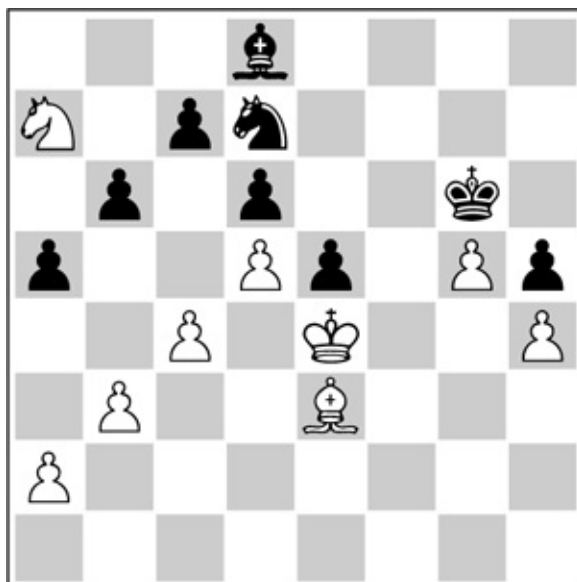
After 11...Kf3 12.Ng3+, the king must go back again anyway: 12...Kg6 13.Kg4, and the knight would soon return to the beautiful square e4.

**12.Kg4 h6 13.h4 h5+ 14.Kf3 Be7 15.Ng3 Nf8 16.Ke4**

King and knight have traded places.

**16...Nd7 17.Ne2 Nf8 18.Nc3 Bd8 19.Nb5 Nh7 20.Bf2 Nf8 21.Na7 Nd7 22.Be3**





**22...Nc5+**

With this move Black makes it easy for his opponent. After the extremely passive 22...Nb8, White would still have to find a way to make progress. He can manage this with 23.Nc6! Nxc6 24.dxc6 Kf7 (bishop moves are out of the question in view of 24...Be7 25.Bxb6) 25.Kf5, and the white king invades decisively.

**23.Bxc5**

Again the ending of good knight versus bad bishop has arisen.

**23...bxc5 24.Nb5!**

White had to take care that he didn't make things difficult for himself. Very tempting was 24.Nc6, but after 24...Bxg5 25.hxg5 h4, Black suddenly has two dangerous passed pawns, with which he can make his opponent's life miserable.

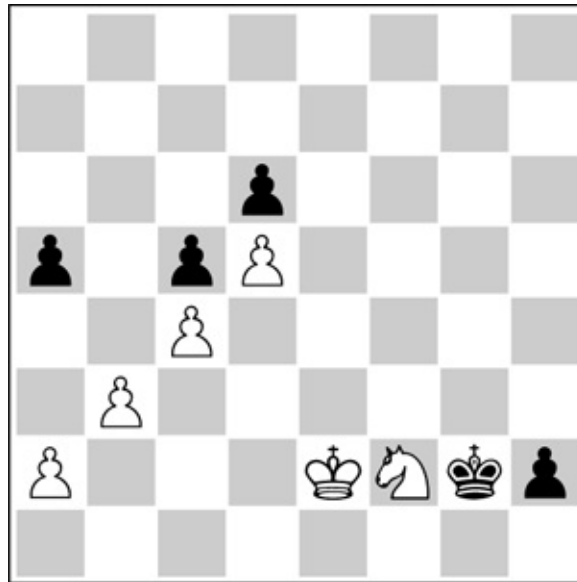
**24...Bxg5**

Black is running out of moves. He will have to sacrifice, or otherwise he has to allow the white king free passage to f5, after which he will be finished as well.

**25.hxg5 Kxg5 26.Nxc7**

This is the difference with the above variation. The knight is on a much more convenient route here.

**26...h4 27.Kf3 e4+ 28.Kxe4 Kg4 29.Ke3 Kg3 30.Ne6 h3 31.Ng5 h2 32.Ne4+ Kg2 33.Nf2 Kg3 34.Ke2 Kg2**



**35.34!**

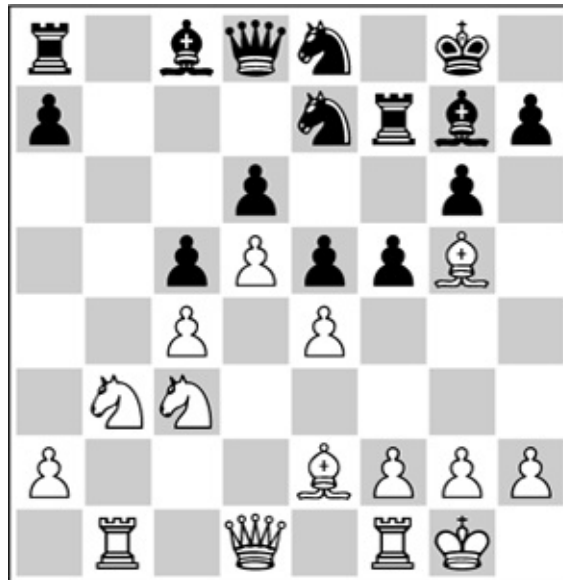
The decisive tempo.

**35...Kg1 36.Kf3 Kf1 37.Kg3 Kg1 38.Nh3+ Kh1 39.Ng5**

And Black finally threw in the towel. A very pretty conclusion would have been 39.b4! axb4 40.Kf2 b3 41.Kf1 b2 42.Nf2#.

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**9.3 Chernin,Alexander**  
**Gunawan,Ronny**  
 Belgrado Open 1988



In order to take the square e4 under control, White played:

**1.exf5Bxf5**

After 1...gxf5, White's play should also be aimed at conquering a central square. Possible is 2.f3, followed by an eventual g2-g4.

**2.Bd3**

Black now lent a helping hand with:

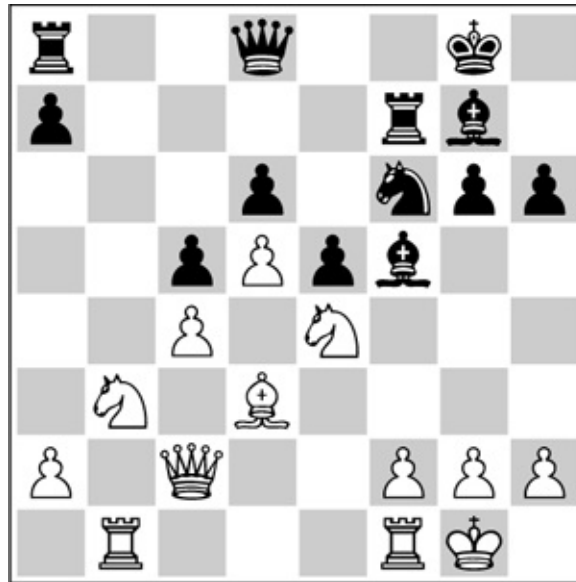
**2...h6?!**

Better was 2...Nf6. The text move plays into White's hands, since he was planning to give the bishop for the knight anyway:

**3.Bxe7!**

Thus, White hopes to increase the pressure on f5, forcing Black to trade the light-squared bishops. In the game White realized this plan:

**3...Rxe7 4.Qc2 Rf7 5.Ne4 Nf6**



### 6.Ng3!

This move is the key to the entire concept.

### 6...Bxd3

A practical chance was offered by the pawn sacrifice 6...e4!? 7.Nxe4 Ng4. Black has given a pawn here, but he has also created a beautiful square for his knight on e5, and in the meantime he has activated his bishop on g7.

Nevertheless, White retains good winning chances.

### 7.Qxd3 Kh7 8.Nd2 Rb8 9.Rb3 Rfb7 10.Ra3 a5 11.Nde4 Nxe4 12.Nxe4

White has succeeded in achieving the 'ideal position' with good knight versus bad bishop. He converted this advantage into a full point as follows:

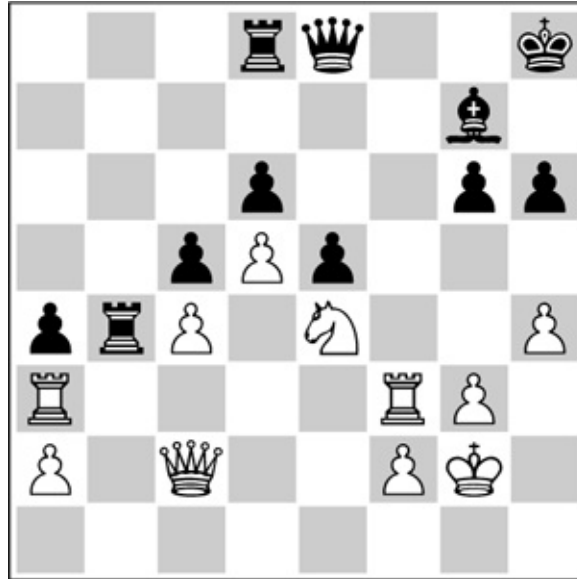
### 12...Rb4 13.g3 a4 14.h4 Kh8 15.Kg2 Qf8 16.Re1 R8b7 17.Re3 Rd7 18.Rf3 Qe8

Here, 18...Qe7 was slightly more tenacious, although in that case with 19.Qc2 White would have taken control as well.

### 19.Qc2

With the entertaining 19.Rf6!, White could have won right away: 19...Bxf6 20.Nxf6 Qf7 21.Nxd7 Qxd7 22.Qxg6, and more pawns will drop off the board.

### 19...Rd8



**20.h5!**

In this way, White further weakens the opponent's light squares.

**20...g5**

Or 20...gxh5 21.Nf6 Bxf6 22.Rxf6 Kg7 23.Re6, and White wins.

**21.Nf6!**

It is time to exchange one advantage for another. Now the white rook invades.

**21...Bxf6 22.Rxf6 Qxh5 23.Qf5 Kg7**

And Black resigned at the same time. After 23...Kg7 24.g4 Qe8 25.Rxh6 Kxh6 26.Rh3+ Kg7 27.Qh7+, he will be mated.

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## 9.4 Olafsson, Helgi Lombardy, William

Palma de Mallorca 1989 (1)



a) In the game, with 28.f5! White managed to create a strong point on e6. At the same time, the square h5 is seriously weakened, which may come in handy for White's operations.

b) The most important part of his plan consists of playing a knight to this strong e6-square via square d4. Once on this square, the knight will support further attacking attempts. A second method for White to embarrass his opponent is by doubling on the h-file.

**1.f5! g5 2.Nh5 Rf7 3.Rg3**

Even 3.Nxg7 Rxg7 4.Rh3, with the threat of Qh5, is highly unpleasant for Black.

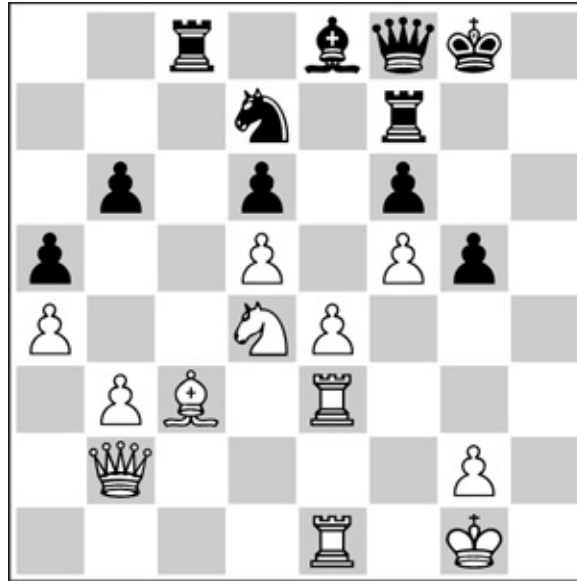
**3...Bd7 4.Kf2 Qe7 5.Rge3**

Consistently continuing on the chosen path. By 'over-protecting' the pawn e4 White is able to reposition his pieces and thus manoeuvre his knight from c3 to e6. If he had kept an 'open eye' for other factors, he would undoubtedly have noticed that a quicker win was on the horizon by making use of the h-file (and the vacated square h5!). Here is a characteristic variation: 5.Rh3 Rc8 6.Nxg7! (no dogmas: the bad bishop is an important defender and as soon as it disappears, Black will collapse due to the weakness of pawn f6) 6...Rxg7 7.Rh6 Rf8 8.Qh5 Rh7 9.Qg6+, and Black will succumb soon.

**5...Qf8 6.Qb1 Rfe7 7.Kg1 Rc8 8.Qb2 Be8 9.Nxg7 Rxg7 10.Ne2 Rf7 11.Bc3 Nd7**

Black also has a strong point, but this does not nearly balance the weakness of the square e6.

## 12.Nd4



### 12...g4?

This eases White's task. But also after 12...Rh7 13.Ne6 Qf7 14.Rg3 Rh5 15.Ree3, followed by Rh3, White prepares a new invasion along the h-file. The knight on e6 is an annoying obstacle for Black.

### 13.Rg3 Ne5 14.Ne6

The knight has finally arrived on this beautiful square, and we will see that the consequences are terrible for the black player.

### 14...Qh6 15.Bxe5 dxe5 16.Qe2 Rh7 17.Qxg4+

And Black resigned. After 17...Kf7, 18.Qg8+ Ke7 19.Rh3 is the most convincing win.

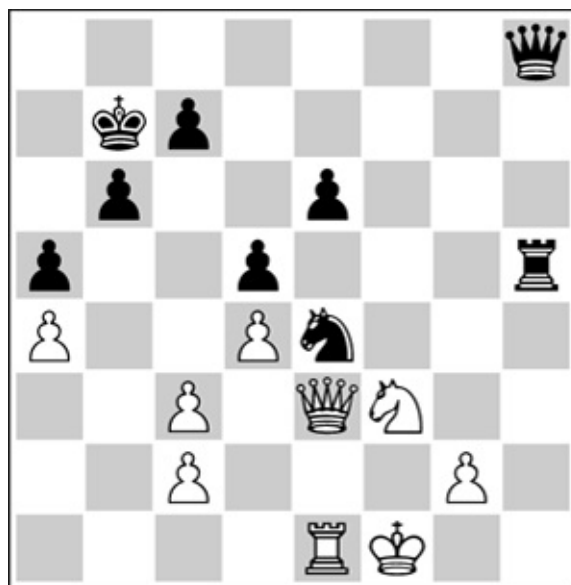
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## Solutions to Chapter 10

### 10.1 Gligoric, Svetozar

Smyslov, Vasily

Amsterdam 1994 (1)



Analogously to the example in this chapter's text part, Gligoric again falls victim to the pawn islands rule. Since White has several weak pawns, it is an impossible task for him to keep everything protected. Moreover, his king is also unsafe. In the game the first blow is dealt on the queenside.

#### 44...Qe8!?

The queen switches to the queenside to besiege the weak brothers on a4 and c3. Due to his weak pawns, White is not able to defend adequately against this.

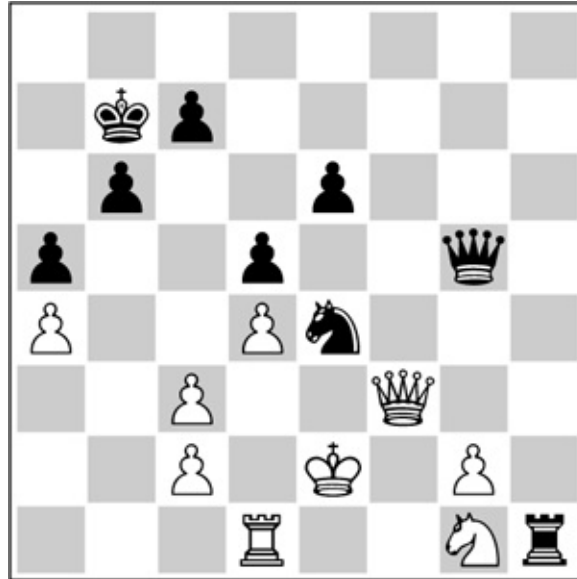
Black could also have obtained a virtually decisive advantage with 44...Rh1+ 45.Ke2 Rxe1+ 46.Nxe1 Qe8, and now Black even wins a pawn.

#### 45.Nd2

White wants to eliminate the strong knight on e4 in order to be able to attack the pawn on e6, but in doing this, he severely weakens his own king's position.

After the passive 45.Ra1 Black has a forced win: 45...Rh1+ 46.Ng1 Qf7+. If White now continues with 47.Ke2 Qh5+ 48.Kf1 (48.Kd3 Rh2+) 48...Qf5+ 49.Ke2 Qg4+ 50.Qf3 Qg5 51.Rd1, we get a nice variation:





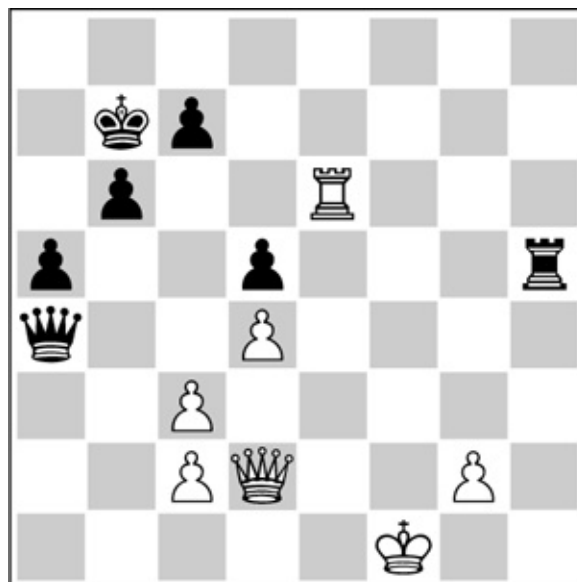
Analysis diagram

51...Nxc3+! 52.Qxc3 (52.Kf2 Nxd1+) 52...Qxg2+. Now it is mate in all lines.  
 For example: 53.Ke3 (53.Kd3 Rh2+) 53...Rh2! (the black pieces reign supreme) 54.Nf3 Qf2+ 55.Kf4 Rh4+ 56.Ke5 Qg3+ 57.Kxe6 Qg8+ 58.Kf6 Rf4+ 59.Ke5 Re4+ 60.Kf6 Re6+ 61.Kf5 Qg6+ 62.Kf4 Re4#.

**45...Nxd2+**

Also after 45...Rh1+ 46.Ke2 Rh4! 47.Kd1 Qxa4, it is game over.

**46.Qxd2 Qxa4 47.Rxe6**



**47...Qa1+**

It seems logical to attack the white king from the queenside. But possibly, there

was a more convincing way to stage a mating attack: 47...Qd7! 48.Re1 (the queen ending after 48.Rh6 Qf5+ 49.Ke1 Rxh6 50.Qxh6 Qxc2 would not allow White to cherish any illusions either) 48...Rh1+ 49.Kf2 Qf5+ 50.Ke2 Qg4+ 51.Kf2 Qh4+ 52.Ke2 Qh5+ 53.Kf2 Rxe1 54.Qxe1 (54.Kxe1 a4+) 54...QS+, and White can forget about the rest.

#### **4RKf2 Rh1**

Here also, the disadvantage of the greater number of pawn islands has led to a direct mating attack by the opposing side. In order to avoid being mated, White must give up a few pawns.

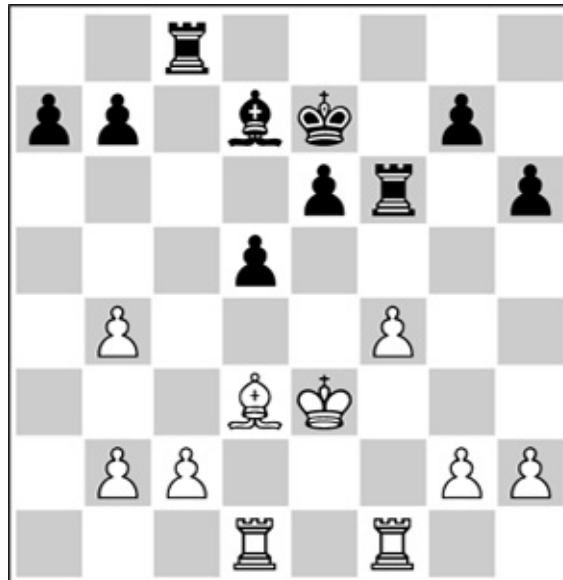
#### **49.Qg5**

The pawn ending after 49.Re1 Rxe1 50.Qxe1 Qxe1+ (50...Qb2+) 51.Kxe1 is lost after 51...Kc6. But also after 49.Kg3 a4 50.Qd3 Qg1, White is in bad shape.

**49...RH+ 50.Kg3 Qxc3+ 51.Qe3 Qxc2 52.Re5 Rd1** **0-1**

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**10.2 Nunnjohn**  
**Hug, Werner**  
Biel 1986 (3)



White must not think ‘static’ by continuing with, for instance, 23.c3 followed by 24.Kd4. In that case he will not make any real progress. With his next move White intends to attack the black pawn structure with c2-c4, at the same time hoping to get rid of his own doubled pawn.

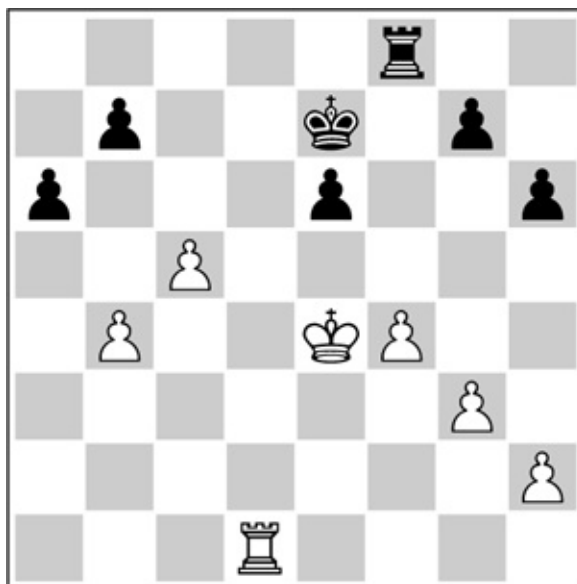
**23.b3! a6 24.c4 dxc4**

Perhaps there was no immediate need for Black to exchange on c4, but sooner or later it would come to this anyway.

**25.bxc4 Bc6 26.g3 Rd8 27.Be4!**

The correct continuation. White trades off two of his opponent’s active pieces, and intends to fix the weak pawn on e6 by occupying the square e5 with his king.

**27...Bxe4 28.Rxd8 Kxd8 29.Kxe4 Ke7 30.Rd1 Rf8 31.c5**



### **31...Rc8**

With the text move Black actually resigns himself to the loss of a pawn, since he cannot sit and watch forever. The threat of Rd1-d6-b6 is starting to become acute. After 31...Rd8? the pawn ending is won for White: 32.Rxd8 Kxd8. Now a possible line is: 33.Ke5 Kd7 34.g4 Ke7 35.h4 Kd7 (or 35...g6 36.h5 gxh5 37.gxh5, and Black runs out of moves) 36.h5 Ke7 37.g5 Kd7 38.gxh6 gxh6 39.Kf6.

### **32.Rd6 Rc7**

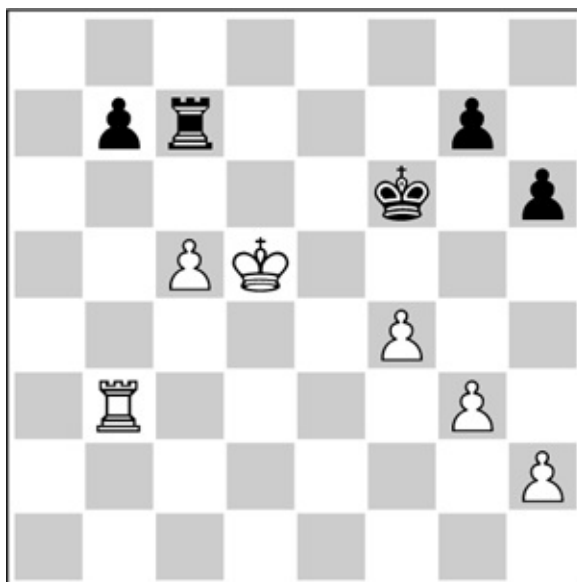
A crucial variation arises after 32...a5!? 33.Rb6 axb4 34.Rxb7+ Kf6 35.Kd4 Rd8+ 36.Kc4 Rd2 37.Rxb4 Rxh2 (material is equal, but the strong c-pawn should decide) 38.c6 Rc2+ (Black is just too late: 38...Ke7 39.Kc5 Rc2+ 40.Kb6 Kd8 41.Kb7!+-) 39.Kb5 g5 40.fxg5+ hxg5 41.Kb6, and White should win.

### **33.Ke5 a5 34.Rxe6+ Kf7 35.Rb6!**

The first catch is made. Now any possible counterchances must be minimized.

### **35...axb4 36.Kd5 b3 37.Rxb3 Kf6**

37...h5 38.Rb6!.



**38.g4!**

Nunn prevents the black king from entering, and now he can drive it back.

**38...Rd7+ 39.Kc4 Re7 40.Rb6+ Kf7 41.Kb5 Ke8 42.f5**

Black has no counterplay and White is systematically preparing the creation of a passed pawn.

**42...Kd8 43.Re6 Rd7 44.Kb6 Rd2**

There is no salvation anymore: 44...Rf7 45.Rg6 h5 46.g5 Rx5 47.Rxg7 h4 48.g6-+.

**45.Kxb7 Rxh2 46.Rg6 h5 47.gxh5 Rxh5 48.c6**

**1-0**

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## Kanjlya

Moscow ch-URS 1952 (10)



White strives for a blockade of the black pawn structure, and he starts his manoeuvre with the following pointed move:

## 22.Nb4!

Now 23.Nd5 is threatened, with a large positional plus. Also 22.Ne3!? came into consideration, although the knight is in the way of the rook on e2: 22...d5 (after 22...Rd7 23.c4, the d5-square is fixed, and White will get what he wants).

Nonsensical would be 22...Bxa2 23.Ng4 Nxb4 24.Bxd8 Qxd8 25.Qxd8 Rxd8 26.hxg4 Bb3 27.Bd5+ Bxd5 28.Rxd5, with a technically winning endgame for White) 23.Bg4!, and White is clearly better.

## 22...d5?!

Or, for example, 22...Rd7 23.Nd5 Nxd5 24.Bxd5 Bxd5 25.Rxd5, and White controls the beautiful light squares. In the game Black wants to prevent this blockade, but this brings him from bad to worse.

## 23.Qg3!

Here it becomes clear why the knight is so well placed on b4. Black must give up an important pawn.

23...Qf7 24.Rxe5

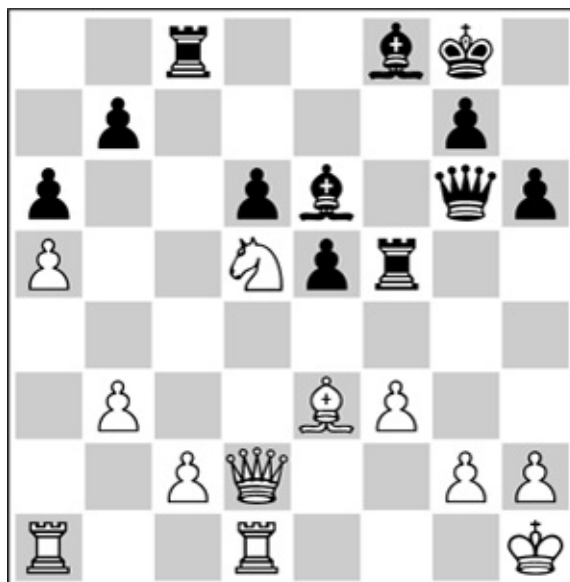
Now that a centre pawn has fallen, the race is run. In despair, Black played:  
**24...d4 25.cxd4 Kh8 26.d5 Bf5 27.d6 Rd7 28.Nd5 Ng8 29.Re2 h6 30.Bf4  
 Rfd8 31.Nb6 g5 32.Be5 Nf6 33.Bc3 Kh7 34.Nxd7 Rxd7 35.a3 Bg6 36.Rde1  
 Bf8 37.Re6**

**1-0**

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## 10.4 Resende,Dacio Pereira,M

Correspondence game, 1988



Yes, there certainly is counterplay for Black. If you have sensed that the position holds a combination, you have hit the bull's eye.

**25...Rxf3!**

Although the strategic drawbacks of the black position are undeniable, he can bring his major pieces to life exactly on time.

**26.gxf3?**

White misses the best defence, which consisted of 26.c4, and even though Black is a pawn up, it is not easy for him to attack White's solid formation.

Nonetheless, after 26...Rf5 27.Rf1 (also after 27.Nb6 Rc7 28.Nd5 Rcf7 29.Rac1, Black has a large advantage) 27...Rd8 28.Nc7 Qf7 29.Rxf5 Bxf5 30.Rf1 Rd7 (incorrect is 30...Qxc7? 31.Bb6 Qd7 32.Bxd8, and suddenly it is White who is virtually winning) 31.Nd5 Qe6, Black will be able to play for a win at his leisure.

**26...Rxc2 27.Rg1**

No solution is offered by 27.Qxc2 Qxc2, and because of, among other things, the lack of coordination between the white pieces, his position collapses.

Furthermore, it is important that 27.Nf6+ is met by 27...Kf7!.

**27...Qf5! 28.Rxg7+**

White tries to prolong the struggle a little, realizing that after 28.Qd1 Black can give mate with 28...Rxh2+!.

**28...Kxg7 29.Qd1 Qg6!**

But after this move, further resistance is futile. If White wants to cover the mate



on g2 with his queen, he will have to let go of the knight on d5. Therefore, White resigned.

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## Solutions to Chapter 11

### 11.1 Kottnauer,Cenek

Euwe, Max

Amsterdam 1950 (13)



After

**29.Nd2?**

Black played the strong

**29...Ne5!**

and now White is threatened with the loss of the important pawn on d4. Out of necessity he played:

**30.d5**

Conceding some important central squares.

**30...Nxd3 31.dxe6 Ne5?!**

For his part, Black does not react all too cleverly either. With 31...Nb2!? 32.e7 Re8 33.Rb1 Nd3, he could have gained a healthy pawn.

**32.exf7?**

The game remains an orgy of mistakes. With a sneaky trick, White could have done himself a good turn: 32.Nf1! Re8 (clearly, 32...Rxd1? fails to 33.e 7) 33.exf7, and Black's advantage is kept within bounds.

**32...Nxf7 33.Kf2 Rd3**

As White realized that his position was ruined, he resigned.

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## 11.2 Bernstein,Osip Stahlberg,Gideon Zurich 1934 (15)



If you have chosen D), you have selected the most promising continuation. Now that White's central set-up is fully stable, he can attack on the flank without restraint. The only thing he should reckon with is the black flank action ...b5-b4. However, this will come too late, since after g2-g4 White already has a few dangerous threats.

The plan under A) looks nice superficially, but White will not accomplish much against Black's solid central set-up, whereas Black is not without counterplay on the queenside following ...b5-b4.

It looks senseless for White to first castle himself, as suggested under B), and only then to start with a flank attack.

Even more risky, and therefore not recommendable, is queenside castling, as under C), since Black will be able to operate against the white king with ...Qd8-a5 and ...b5-b4.

### 14.g4 g6

If Black searches for counterplay with 14...b4?!, he will be quickly counted out after 15.g5 Ne4 16.f3 bxc3 17.bxc3 Qa5 18.0-0! Qxc3 19.Rac1, and Black will get no compensation for the piece he loses.

### 15.Bd1!

Better than the immediate 15.g5, since that would be met by 15...Nh5. Now 16.g5 Ne4 17.Nxf7! Kxf7 18.Qxh7+ Kf8 19.Be5 is threatened.

### 15...Bf8

Also here it is interesting to investigate if there is any counterplay to be found

for Black. After both 15...Qa5 and 15...b4, White will carry out his threat of 16.g5, followed by Nxf7!.

**16.Bg5 Be7**

Forced, since 16...Bg7 17.Qh4 is extremely unpleasant for Black.

**17.Qf3 b4 18.cxb4**

Also strong is 18.Ba4!? Rf8 19.Bxf6 (certainly not 19.Bh6? bxc3 20.bxc3 Qa5 21.Bxf8 Rxf8, and Black has nice compensation for the exchange) 19...Bxf6 20.Nd7, and again White wins material, without Black getting anything in return.

**18...Bxb4+ 19.KH Be7 20.Kg2 Rb8 21.Ba4!**

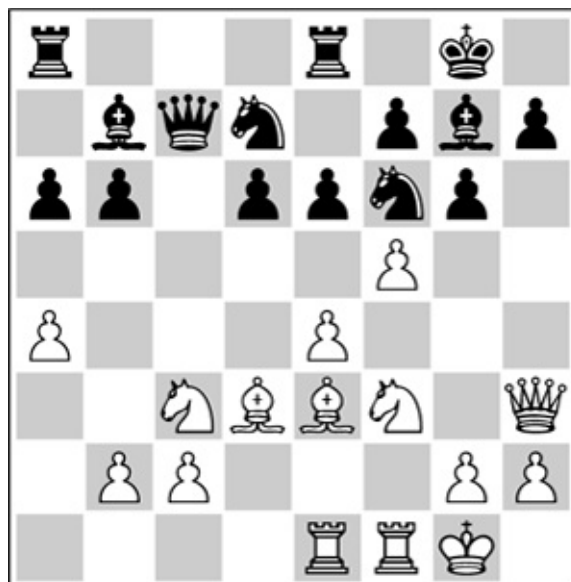
Thus White wins the exchange after

**21...Rf8 22.Bh6**

which decides the battle in a higher sense. On move 38 White cashed in the point.

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**11.3 Westerduin, Phillip  
Grooten, Herman**  
Bussum 1995 (3)



The correct answer is B). Answer C) is pretty bad, as White will then have a free hand on the kingside.

Answer A); to continue with 15...exf5 16.exf5, has the chief drawback that the white bishop on d3 is activated, and this weighs more heavily than the opening of the diagonal of Black's bishop on b7. In that case White will be ready for 17.Bh6, followed by Ng5, creating problems for Black along the f-file. However, the white player had hardly reckoned with:

**15...gxf5!**

Apparently Black is weakening his king position, but this turns out not to be so bad. His strong pawn centre, combined with the open g-file and the a8-h1 diagonal, definitely weigh up against this concession.

**16.exf5?!**

After this swap, White definitely has a big problem. He would have done better to maintain the tension in the centre by continuing with 16.Bh6.

**16...e5!**

This move is essential. The white pawn on f5 is quite in the way of White's actions.

**17.Be2d5 18.Bh6**

A logical move, but just the one Black was waiting for. With 18.Qg3!? White could have tried to create complications. Only with 18...Kf8! can Black obtain an advantage. 18...d4, for instance, fails to 19.Nxd4, in view of the pin. A possible variation is 19.Kh1 Rac8, and now the black pawn centre will roll on

irresistibly.

**18...Bxh6 19.Qxh6 Qc5+ 20.KM Qf8**

There was also nothing against setting the pawn centre in motion with 20...d4.

**21.Qxf8+?**

After the queen exchange, the game is decided in a higher sense. White should have tried to fish in troubled waters with 21.Qh4.

**21...Kxf8 22.Bd1 Rac8 23.Ng5 Nc5 24.b4**

This is an enormous weakening, but otherwise White will lose a pawn.

**24...Ncd7 25.Na2 h6 26.Nh3 d4 27.Kg1 Bd5 28.Nc1 Rc4**

And White had seen enough: 0-1.

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**11.4 Euwe,Max**  
**Landau,Salomon**

Amsterdam m 1931 (6)



A) The idea to trade off a blockading piece is not so bad in itself. Nevertheless, White will make no progress after, for instance, 1.Rxf8 Rxf8 2.h4 Kd7 3.Kh2 b6 4.Bh3 c5. The pawns are blockaded and Black will also start rolling on the queenside.

C) Exchanging all the rooks is nonsense. In fact, in a bishop ending White's centre pawns will become more vulnerable, and Black's queenside pawns will be much more dangerous than the blockaded white ones.

B) The plan with Rf4 is indeed correct. In the game there followed:

**26.Rf4!**

After 26.Rxf8 Rxf8 27.Be4 g6 28.Rb2, White cannot make any progress.

**26...Kd7**

Perhaps Black should have defended with 26...g5!?. A possible continuation is: 27.Ra4 a6 28.Be4 h6 29.Kg2 Rde8 30.Re2 – White has a pleasant little plus.

**27.Rdf2 Rxf4 28.gxf4!**

Obviously White takes with the pawn, further strengthening his central position.

**28...Bf5 29.Rb2 b6 30.Kf2 Rc8 31.Ke3 Ke6 32.Bf1!**

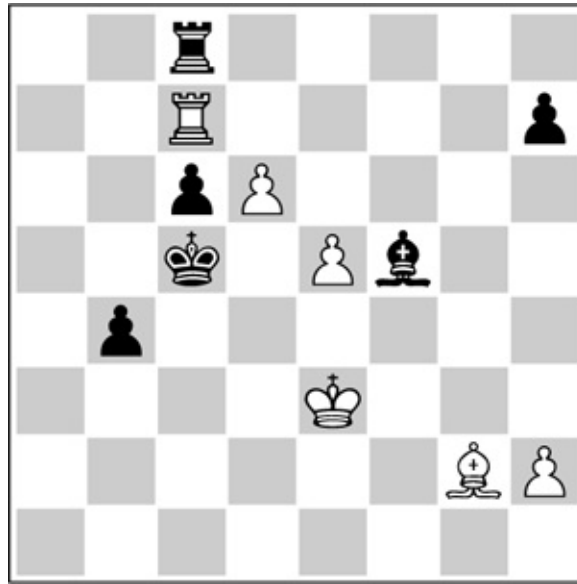
The bishop strives for the square c4.

**32...b5 33.a4 a6 34.Ra2!**

This move is an important link in White's plan to take advantage of his centre pawns. White tries to penetrate with his rook on the seventh rank.

**34...g5 35.axb5 axb5 36.Ra7 gxf4+ 37.Kxf4 Rf8 38.Re7+ Kd5 39.Ke3 b4 40.Bg2+ Kc5 41.Rc7 Rc8**





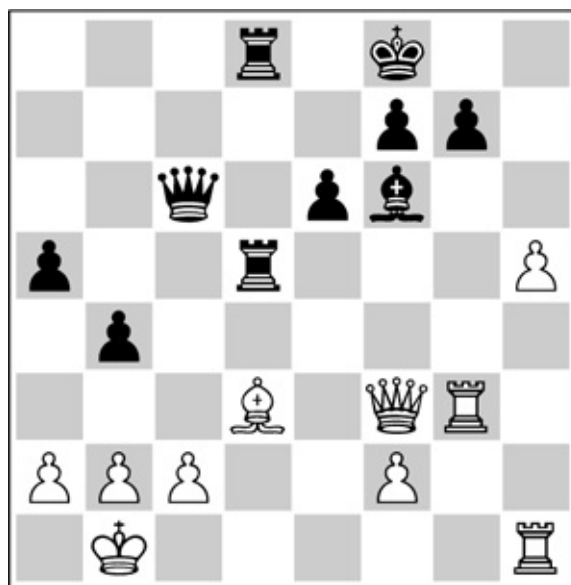
In this way Black tries to defend himself, but Euwe has prepared an extra little something for his opponent.

**42.d7! Rd8 43.Rxc6+ Kb5 44.e6 Bxe6 45.Rxe6 b3 46.Bc6+ Kc4 47.Kd2 1-0**

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## Solutions to Chapter 12

### 12.1 Ramaekers Grooten, Herman Brunssum 1982



As was so effectively demonstrated in the game Medina-Botvinnik, Black wants to set up a battery by placing his queen in front of the bishop. In this case it takes a little more skill.

#### **28...Qc5!**

This is a multi-purpose move. To start with, Black threatens 29...Qd4, and at the same time he takes the pawns on h5 and f2 under fire. This turns out to be important if White tries to prevent the main threat. After both 30.Qe3 and 30.Rg4, there follows 30...Rxxh5, whereas to 30.Qe4, 30...Qxf2 is the strongest reply. In the game Black is allowed to make use of the diagonal.

#### **29.Be4?!**

After 29.h6 Qd4 Black is allowed to set up his battery, and after 30.c3 bxc3 31.hxg7+ (on 31.h7, 31...c2+ wins) 31...Bxg7, White is forced to eliminate the dangerous bishop with 32.Rxg7, but after 32...Qxg7 he will be too far behind in material.

#### **29...Qd4 30.c3 bxc3**

This emphasizes the importance of the pawn on b4.

#### **31.Bxd5**

After 31.bxc3, 31...Rb5+ is simplest: 32.Ka1 Qb4! 33.Rb1, and now the elegant

33...Rd1.

**31...c2+!**

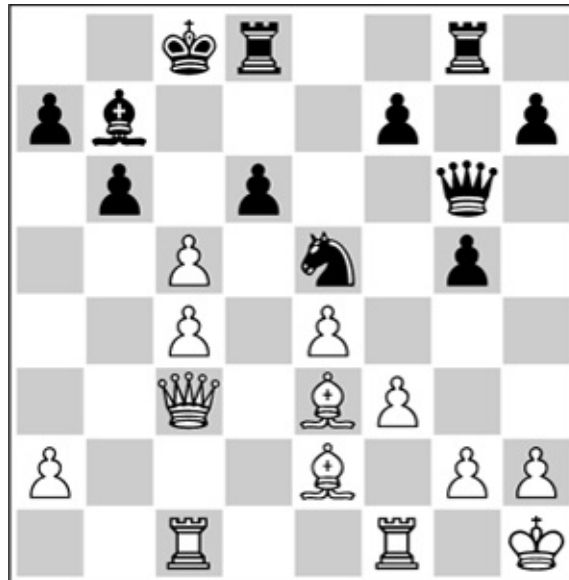
The white king is forced out into the open now, where it will fall prey to Black's attacking pieces. The end is short and sweet.

**32.Kxc2 Qxb2+ 33.Kd3 Rxd5+ 34.Ke3 Qd2+**

**0-1**

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**12.2 Hebden,Mark  
Hodgson,Julian**  
Guernsey 1985



White has just captured on c5, and doubtlessly he expected Black to take back. But Hodgson realized that in this position the initiative is of the utmost importance, and played:

**18...g4!!**

Introducing an immediate mate threat into the position with 19...gxf3. The other intention of this move is to undermine the strong white pawn formation e4-f3-g2 that his bishop is staring at.

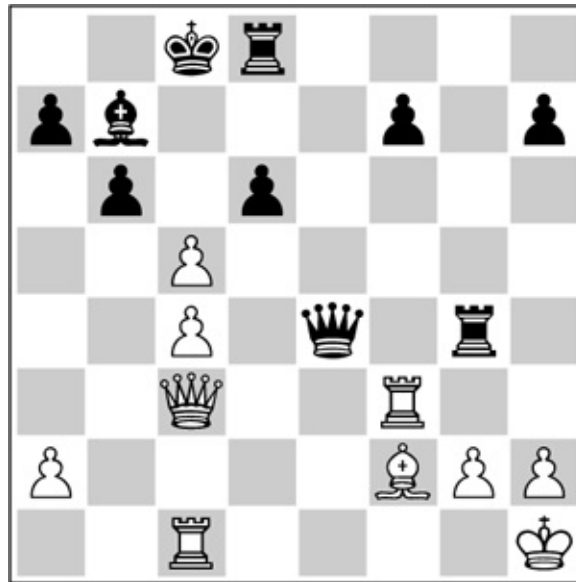
**19.Rg1?**

After 19.fxf3 the long diagonal will be opened, which will seal White's fate:

19...Qxe4! (better than 19...Nxf3 20.Bf4, and White holds) 20.Bf3 Nxf3

21.Rxf3 Rxf3, and now:

A) 22.Bf2. In the attack, the opposite-coloured bishops are to Black's advantage. Now he strikes home with:



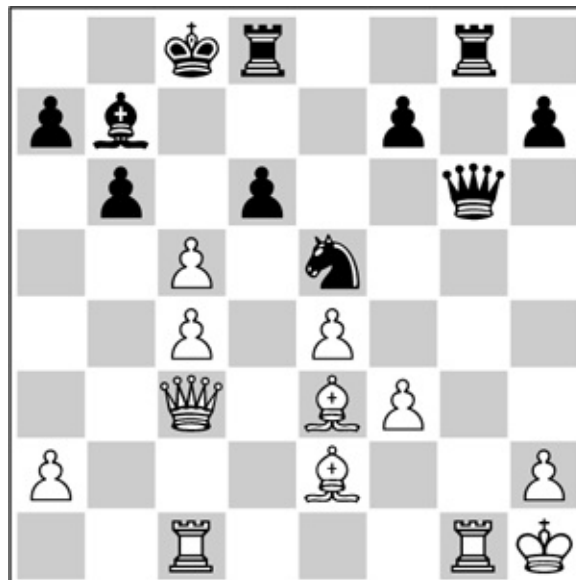
Analysis diagram

22...Rxc2! 23.Kxc2 Qe2 24.Qe3 Bxf3+, and now 25.Qxf3 is not on in view of 25...Rg8+, winning the queen;

B) 22.Qf6 Rdc8, and the threats along the long diagonal will be too much for Black to handle.

There was still a tenacious defence with 19.Qc2, but also then Black will clear the path for his monstrous bishop: 19...gxf3 20.Bxf3 dxc5 21.Rg1 Nd3 22.Rcf1 Bxe4, with a decisive advantage.

**19...gxf3 20.gxf3**



**20...Qxe4!**

Hodgson doesn't beat about the bush! One by one the granite fragments come crumbling down. In this position the bishop on b7 turns out to be invaluable.

**21.Rxg8**

After 21.fxe4 Bxe4+ 22.Rg2 Rxg2, White will lose the house.

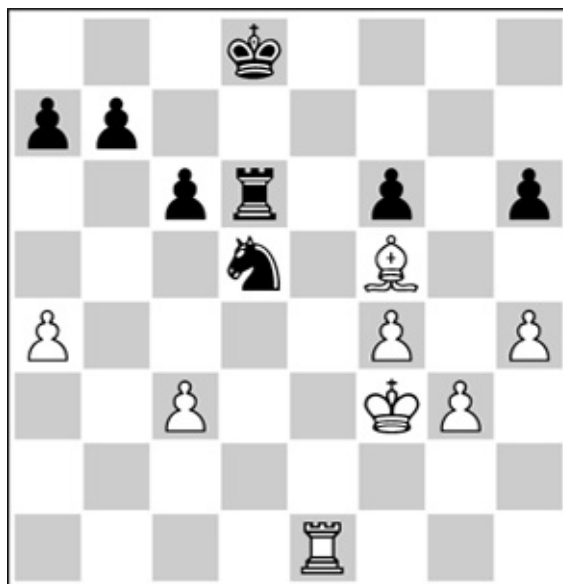
**21...Rxg8**

And White resigned. A masterpiece!

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## 12.3 Alekhine,Alexander Euwe,Max

Netherlands Wch-m 1937 (1)



White does not bother about the pawn on c3 – he invades as quickly as possible with his king on the weakened kingside. His chief goal is to win the pawn on h6, since after that he will have a passed h-pawn, which is the natural enemy of the knight.

### 34.Kg4! Ne7

After 34...Nxc3 35.Kh5 Nxa4? 36.Kxh6+/-, followed by 37.Kg6, the white h-pawn will be much quicker than Black's passed pawns on the queenside. Better is 35...Rd2 36.Kxh6 Ne2 37.g4 Nxf4 38.h5 Rg2, but also here, the h-pawn will play a decisive role after 39.Kh7.

### 35.Bb1 Ke8?

It is understandable that Euwe wants to play his king to the threatened flank. But presumably Black should have started running with his own pawns: 35...b5. After 36.axb5 cxb5, 37.f5! is the correct strategy (37.Kh5 is met by 37...f5, and Black holds) 37...Rc6 38.Kh5, and in the long run the white h-pawn will be a significant factor. Here is an illustrative variation, which shows how play can develop: 38...Rxc3 39.g4 Rh3 40.Re6 Ng8 41.Ra6 b4 42.Rxa7 Ne7 43.Ra6 b3 44.Rxf6 Rh1 45.Bd3, and White should win. On 35...Rd5, White plays 36.f5, after which 37.Kh5 is again possible.

### 36.Kh5 Kf7 37.Ba2+ Kf8 38.Kxh6

The most important aim has been achieved.

### 38...Rd2?

This eases White's task. But also after 38...f5+ 39.Be6 Rd3 40.h5 Rxc3 41.Rd1

Ke8 42.c4 Ng8+ 43.Bxg8 Rxd8 44.c5, his winning chances would be substantial.

**39.Be6 Rd3 40.g4 Rxc3 41.g5**

And the white majority decides the issue.

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**12.4 Van der Linde**  
**Grooten,Herman**  
Utrecht 1985



If your pieces are as active as in the diagram position, you can start looking for combinations.

**28...Ne3!**

Tearing open the second rank, to try to establish a cooperation between his rook and bishop.

**29.fxe3**

A) Declining the sacrifice with 29.Qd3 would also have led to victory for Black:



## Analysis diagram

A1) Now, inaccurate is 29...Rxa1 30.Bxa1 Nxc2 31.Kf1 (not 31.Nf3? Bxf3 32.Qxf3 Nh4+ 33.Qg3 Qc1 mate), and White saves himself;

A2) But after 29...Nxc2!, Black's many threats force a decision, as becomes clear from the following complex of variations:

A21) 30.Nf3 Rxa1+ 31.Bxa1 Bxf3 32.Qxf3 Nh4+ 33.Qg3 Qc1#;

A22) 30.Kf1 Nxe1-+;

A23) 30.Qg3 Qxc3 31.hxc3 Rxa1 32.Bxa1 Nxe1, winning a piece.

B) In 29.h4, White has a nice attempt to distract Black: 29...Qf4 30.g3 Qe4 31.Qh3 (also after 31.f3, Black will profit from the chaos that has arisen in the white camp: 31...Qf5 32.g4 (32.Qd3 Rg2+) 32...Qf4 33.Qh3 Rxa1 34.Bxa1 Nxc4 35.Qf1 Qg3+ 36.Kh1 Nd2, and again White's fate is sealed by the bishop on b7), and now Black has prepared a beautiful line to destroy White: 31...Rxf2 32.Kxf2 Ng4+ 33.Kf1 Qxc4+ and all of White's pieces drop off the board.

**29...Qxe3+ 30.Kh1 Rf2! 31.Qg1**

Also after 31.Qd3 the bishop will do its job: 31...Bxc2+ 32.Kg1 Rf1+ 33.Kxc2 Rg1#.

**31...Qe2**

Threatening 32... Rf1.

**32.Nf3 Bxf3**

32...Rxf3 came into consideration as well.

**33.Re1 Rxc2 34.Rxe2 Rxe2+?!**

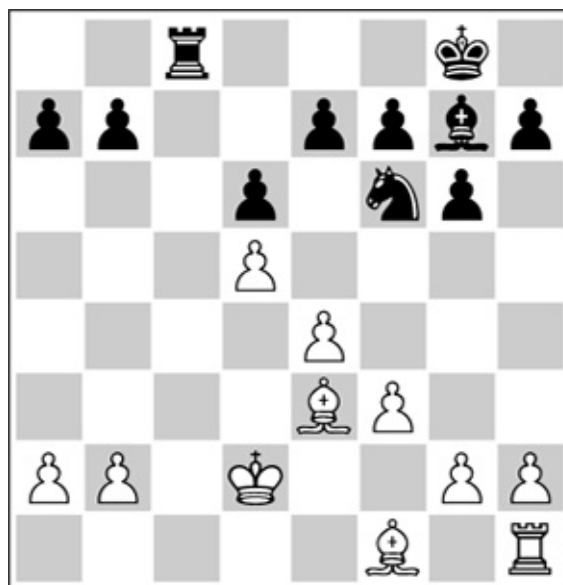
Careless, although White gave up the fight here.

A teammate in this club match pointed out to the players that mate in two with 34...Rf2+ 35.Qg2 Rf1# would have been better.

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## Solutions to Chapter 14

### 14.1 Ree,Hans Cornelis,Frans Siegen ol 1970



In this position, which is still known from opening theory, White can obtain an advantage in the following subtle way:

#### **16.g3!**

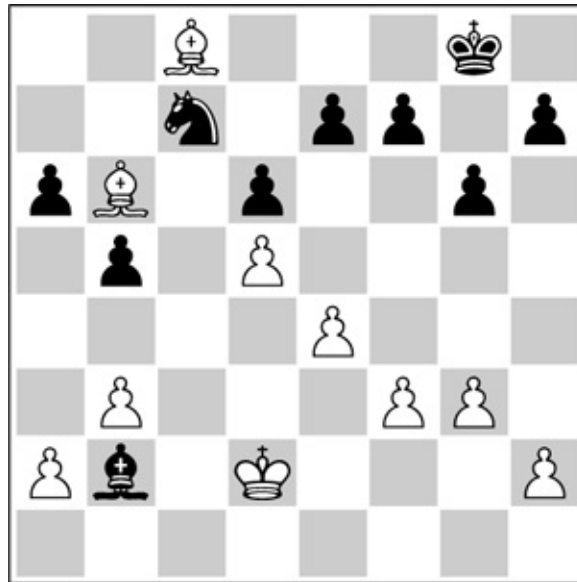
Play for the square on which the opponent of your rook is standing! If White wants to achieve something, the rook on c8 must be forced to declare its intentions. There are several reasons why the rook is good on c8. For instance, White cannot win a pawn with 16.Bxa7, since Black has the reply 16...Ra8 followed by 17...Rxa2 at hand.

#### **16...Nd7**

After this move, White conquers the open c-file, which yields him excellent winning chances. A few other possibilities are:

A) 16...Kf8 17.Bh3 Rc7 18.Rc1! (not 18.Bxa7? in view of 18...b6! 19.Bxb6 Rb7 20.Be3 Rxb2+ 21.Kd3 Rxa2, and Black should be able to hold) 18...Rxc1 19.Kxc1 b6 20.b4 Ke8 21.Kc2 Kd8 22.Kd3, and in this position, with the bishop pair White has the upper hand;

B) 16...a6 17.Bh3 Rc7 18.Rc1 (now White exchanges the rooks, in order to exploit his bishop pair in the ensuing ending) 18...Ne8 19.b3 Bb2 20.Rxc7 Nxc7 21.Bc8 b5 22.Bb6.



Analysis diagram

And White wins at least a pawn.

**17.Bh3 Rc7 18.Bxd7!**

In this position White parts with his bishop pair in order to gain control of the open file.

**18...Rxd7 19.b3a6 20.Rc1**

And thanks to his possession of the only open file, White has obtained excellent winning chances. The future Dutch grandmaster manages to increase his advantage in grand style.

**20...h5 21.Rc8+ Kh7 22.Bb6**

In this way, the rook is made inactive.

**22...f5**

A better attempt was 22...e6, even though Black still won't be able to extricate himself

**23.Kd3fxe4+ 24.Kxe4!**

Curiously, White takes with the king.

**24...Bf6 25.a4 Kg7 26.f4 Kf7 27.f5!**

Another strong move, with which the white player further increases his influence on the light squares.

**27...Be5 28.b4 Kf6 29.fxg6 Kxg6 30.b5 axb5 31.axb5 Kf6 32.Be3**

White aims at conquering the h-pawn. Another plan was 32.Bc7, followed by b5-b6, Rc8-b8 enRxb7.

**32...e6 33.Rh8 exd5+ 34.Kxd5 Kg6 35.Rh6+**

And Black preferred not to stick around for the rest. The winning procedure is

not evident yet, but after 35.Rh6+ Kg7 36.Rxh5 Rc7 37.Ke6 White should manage to secure the point.

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## 14.2 Fischer, Robert Spassky, Boris

Sveti Stefan m 1992 (1)



The solution of the problem in this position can be found on the a-file! Since for positional reasons Black cannot go for ...b5xa4, White puts his pieces on the a-file, threatening a4xb5, with which he would conquer the a-file. Then Black's lack of space will prove fatal to him.

**22.Ra3!**

The start of the intended tripling.

**22...Ndf6 23.Rea1 Qd7 24.R1a2 Rfc8 25.Qc1 Bf8 26.Qa1 Qe8**

For now, Black has anticipated White's actions well, and an opening of the a-file would be harmless at this point. But now White comes up with another preparatory move.

**27.NH!**

The idea behind this move is not so easy to foresee. When the swap on b5 has taken place, the pawn on b5 will be a target, and on b1 the white knight will be able to help aiming at this target.

**27...Be7 28.N1d2 Kg7 29.Nb1**



White's strategy has succeeded completely. But now that all Fischer's pieces are somewhat tucked away on the queenside, Spassky seizes his only chance to do something in return.

**29...Nxe4!?**

With this piece sacrifice he blows up the white centre, so as not to perish slowly on the queenside. After a move like 29...Nd7, White's plan would work perfectly: 30.axb5 axb5 31.Rxa8 Rxa8 32.Rxa8 Qxa8 33.Qxa8 Bxa8 34.Na3, and pawn b5 will fall.

**30.Bxe4f5 31.Bc2 Bxd5 32.axb5**

As quickly as possible, White involves his pieces in the game via the a-file.

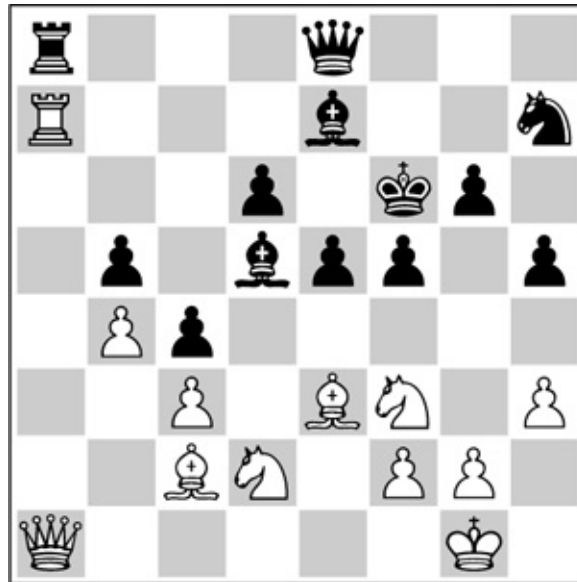
**32...axb5 33.Ra7!**

For his sacrificed piece, Black has obtained two pawns, but White has adapted to the altered picture. Now the black king must move to an unsafe square. The text move is better than 33.Rxa8, which is aimed at exchanging pieces. That won't wash here, as after 33...Bxa8 Black would have considerable counterplay.

**33...Kf6**

33...f4 is met by 34.Bc1 Rxa7 35.Rxa7 Ra8 36.Nbd2, and White conquers the square e4, after which Black's compensation will disappear like snow in summer.

**34.Nbd2 Rxa7 35.Rxa7 Ra8**



Spas sky tries to neutralize the pressure on the a-file, after which he hopes to generate sufficient counterplay with his strong pawn centre. With his next move Fischer hits his opponent 'straight in the heart'.

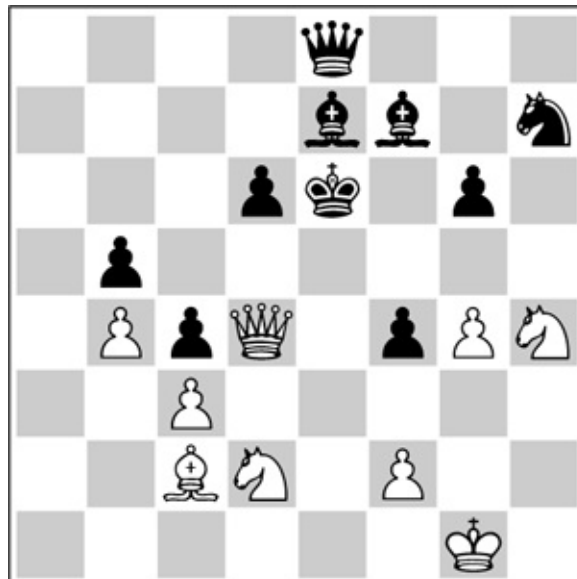
**36.g4!!**

The strong pawn centre is attacked, and as a nice extra the black king will now start feeling the draught. Since the rest of the game lies outside the scope of this theme, I give the rest of the moves with only light comments.

**36...hxc4 37.hxc4 Rxa7 38.Qxa7 f4 39.Bxf4**

White returns the material in order to besiege the black king himself

**39...exf4 40.Nh4! Bf7 41.Qd4+ Ke6**



**42.Nf5!**



The white pieces cooperate beautifully.

**42...Bf8 43.Qxf4**

With 43.Be4 gxf5 44.Bxf5+ Ke7 45.Ne4 Qd8 46.Bxh7, White could have brought about an immediate decision.

**43...Kd7 44.Nd4 Qe1+ 45.Kg2 Bd5+ 46.Be4 Bxe4+47.Nxe4**

The beautifully centralized white pieces now hurl themselves at the poor, virtually unprotected black king.

**47...Be7 48.Nxb5 Nf8 49.Nbxd6 Ne6 50.Qe5**

**1-0**

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**14.3 Hamann,Svend**  
**Uhlmann, Wolfgang**  
Amsterdam 1975 (15)



Black has a space advantage on the kingside. From the model example Kar-pov-Unzicker we know that there is a method to prepare the doubling of rooks by temporarily closing off the file.

**23...Ng5!**

By putting the knight on the g-file, Black prevents his opponent from swapping rooks. This enables him to double his rooks. After that, Uhlmann can choose the moment when he wants to remove the knight himself, and he will only do so if he conquers the g-file in the process.

**24.a3 Rg7 25.Rg2 Rag8 26.Rag1**

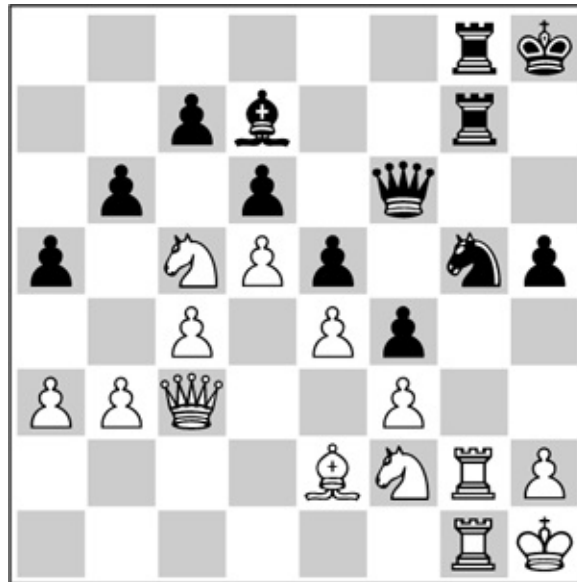
Despite his lack of space, White has also succeeded in doubling. But it is clear that dark clouds have gathered over his king's position.

**26...Nc5!**

Of course! The wayward knight is brought back into the game, and in passing this also distracts the d3 knight from the defence.

**27.Nxc5**

27.Bf1 will not help either. Black strikes mercilessly with 27...Nxf3 28.Nxc5 Nxc5 29.Nxd7 Qf7 30.Nxe5 dxe5, and now 31.Kxg1 fails to 31...f3 32.Rg3 Rxg3+ 33.hxg3 Rxg3+ 34.Kh1 Qg7, and Black's attack along the g-file decides.



### 27...Bh3!!

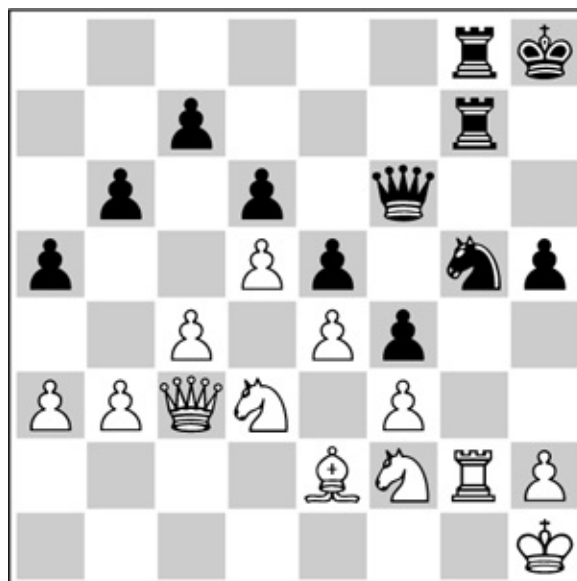
An unexpected, spectacular move! Black does not automatically recapture, but instead springs a nice surprise on his opponent. Now that the knight has been diverted from d3, several mate threats have become possible.

### 28.Rxg5

After 28.Nxh3 Black crowns his work with 28...Nxh3 29.Rxg7 (29.Qc1 Nxg1+ 29...Nf2+!, forcing mate. By the way, this knight check is better than 29...Rxg7?, since after 30.Rxg7 Qxg7 31.Qe1 everything is covered and White will repel the attack.

Or 28.Bf1 Bxg2+! 29.Bxg2 bxc5, and Black wins;

Or 28.Ncd3 Bxg2+ 29.Rxg2.



## Analysis diagram

At first sight it looks as if White has things under control again, but he will be rudely awakened. The following combination comes like a bolt from the blue: 29...Nxe4! 30.Nxe4 Rxc2 31.Ng3. This looks like a nice attempt, but this position also contains a combination: 31...Rxc2+! 32.Kxc2 Qh4+ 33.Kg2 Qxc3+ 34.Kf1 Qg1#.

### **28...Rxc2 29.Ng4**

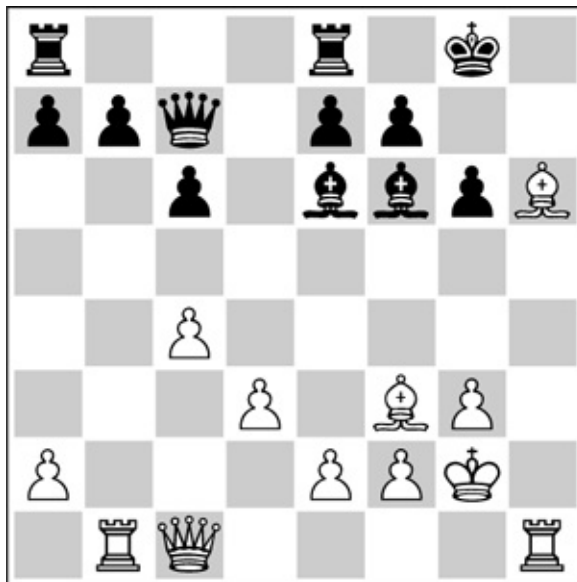
Pure desperation, as also after, for instance, 29.Nxc3 Rxc3+ 30.Nxc3 Qg5, Black threatens mate on two squares, which cannot be parried anymore. Now Black forces his opponent to resign with a simple move.

### **29...bxc3**

Correct! Now the knight on g4 will also be lost, and Black will have a decisive material advantage. Therefore, White resigned.

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**14.4 Seirawan, Yasser  
Sokolovjvan**  
Sarajevo 1987 (8)



Here White continued with the attractive:

**22.Qg1!**

Bringing his queen to the h-file. He intends to besiege the black king via the h7-square. Remarkably enough, Black can do virtually nothing against the coming attack.

**22...Bf5 23.Qh2 e5**

Black understandably wants to create 'luft' for his king, but this allows a nice tactical trick.

**24.Bg5! Bg7 25.Qh4!**

This move is decisive. Please note that if Black had left the pawn on e7, White could have given mate with 25.Qh7+ Kf8 26.Bh6 Bxh6 27.Qh8. Now Black has e7 as an escape square, but the downside is that the square f6 has been weakened, and White is ready for 26.Bf6, followed by 27.Qh8+ and mate.

**25...f6**

Despair, since 25...Re6 was also impossible on account of 26.e4, winning a piece.

**26.Bxf6 Rab8 27.g4**

**1-0**

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## Solutions to Chapter 15

### 15.1 Makogonov, Vladimir Keres, Paul

Leningrad/Moscow 1939 (1)



a) White is a little better, since he possesses the bishop pair in an open position. Still, Black is not in real trouble, as especially the bishop on g2 is not doing much at the moment. The bishop pair will only have full play if the position is opened further. That is why White tries to provoke his opponent into creating weaknesses. The evaluation after the given move sequence is that White is virtually winning.

b) An analysis:

#### 19.Qe3

The alternative 19.b5, with the intention of making the pawn majority on the queenside operative, does not yield much.

#### 19.f4?!

This is precisely what the white player was hoping for. Black opens the h3-c8 diagonal and this doesn't exactly help him. Much better was 19...Rfd8, although after 20.bxc5 dxc5 21.Rad1 White keeps a small but tangible advantage. But not 19...cxb4? in view of 20.axb4 Rxb4 21.Ba3 Rb6 22.c5, and White gets the upper hand.

#### 20.Qd3

Obviously White does not play 20.Qxf4? in view of 20...Ne4; nor 20.gxf4? in

view of 20...Nh5.

**20...fxg3 21.hxg3Rfd8**

21...d5 22.cxd5 exd5 23.bxc5 Nd7 24.Qc3 Nxc5 25.Rc2.



**22.Qe3!**

The queen returns to this square, with more force this time. Both the pawns on c5 and e6 are placed under fire.

**22...cxb4**

Black must do something, or else White will slowly increase the pressure.

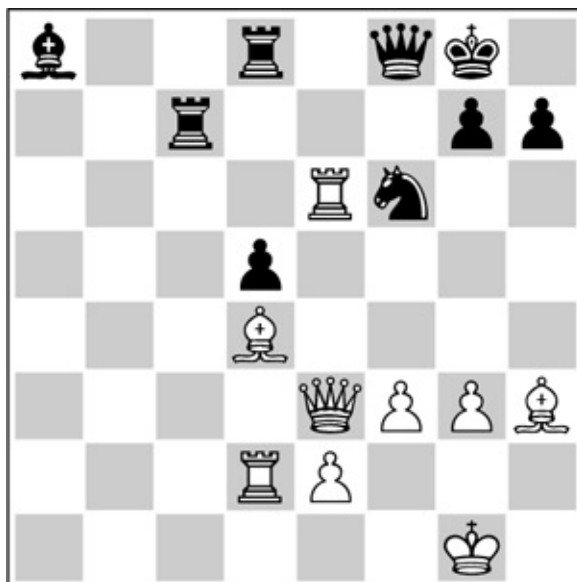
However, the consequence is that the position is opened further, which is to the advantage of the side with the bishop pair!

**23.axb4 Rxb4 24.Rxa7**

Perhaps 24.Bh3 was to be preferred; 24...e5, and only now 25.Rxa7.

**24...Rb7 25.Ra6 Rc7 26.Bh3 e5 27.Ba3**

The bishops take aim at the vulnerable black pawn centre from both sides. A sharp option was 27.c5!? d5 (now 27...Rxc5?? fails to 28.Raxd6; and 27...dxc5? is not possible in view of 28.Rxd8+ Qxd8 29.Bxe5, and the bishops reign supreme) 28.Bxe5 Qxc5 29.Bd4 Qe7 30.Re6 Qf8



Analysis diagram

and here there is bound to be a combination that ends all resistance: 31.Rxf6! gxf6 32.Be6+ Kh8 33.Qf4, winning.

**27...Ne8**

Now follows the answer to question c):

**28.c5!**

Now the position is opened, so the bishops will have full play!

**28...Rc6**

After the text move, material will be lost as well. After 28...dxc5?, several things would go wrong for Black: 29.Re6 Rxd2 30.Rxe7 Rd1+ 31.Kf2 Rxe7, and now White has the nasty check 32.Qb3+, when 32...Rd5 does not help anymore because of 33.e4.

**29.cxd6 Nxd6 30.Rxd6! Rcx6 31.Bxd6**

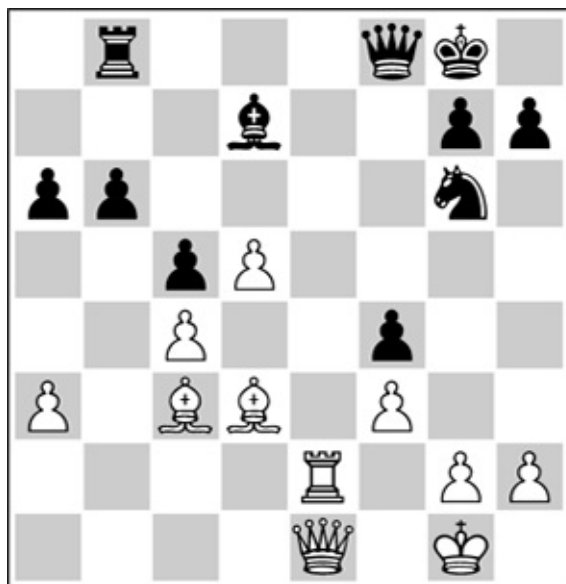
**1-0**

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## 15.2 Prusikin,Michael Markosjan

Pulvermuhle 2006 (8)



The black knight is an important defender, so it must be put to the test. White does this by bringing up new reserves.

**33.h4!**

If the knight has to move, the bishops will gain in strength, and also the e7-square will become accessible for the rook. Also attractive-looking is 33.Bxg6 hxg6 34.Re7, but then Black defends with 34...Re8, and due to the opposite-coloured bishops White probably cannot win.

**33...Re8 34.h5 Ne7**

Even worse is 34...Nh8 35.Rxe8 Qxe8 36.QM (also after 36.Qxe8+ Bxe8 37.Be5 the endgame is a hopeless affair for Black) 36...h6 37.Bh7+ Kf8 38.Qxb6, and White wins a crucial pawn, since 38...Qe3+ 39.Kh2 Qxc3 fails to 40.Qd8+ Be8 41.Qd6+ Kf7 42.Qe6+ Kf8 43.d6, with mate threats on e7 and on g8 that cannot both be parried.

**35.Re5**

35.QM wasn't bad either.

**35...g6 36.Qh4**

The queen makes optimal use of the weakened dark squares.

**36...Bf5 37.Bxf5?!**

White parts with his bishop pair, just when he had a killer move available.

Winning was 37.d6!, when Black could have thrown in the towel straightaway: 37...Nc6 38.hxg6 Bxg6 39.Bxg6, and the mate threats cannot be warded off anymore.

**37...Nxf5 38.Qxf4 Nd4 39.Qxf8+ Rxf8**

Black gave up the fight, since in the rook ending that ensues after 39...Rxf8 40.hxg6 hxg6 41.Bxd4 cxd4 42.Re4, he didn't see any prospects.

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**15.3 Rotlewi,Georg  
Rubinstein,Akiba**  
Lodz 1907



**21...Qh4!**

Also interesting is 21...Nxb2!?, which turns out to be possible here as well. It is important that 22.Qh5 misfires after 22...Bxe4 23.Qxb2 Bxg2+!, and Black wins.

**22.g3**

By the way, 22.h3 was also impossible, as Black strikes home with 22...Rxc3! 23.Bxc3 Bxe4 24.Qxg4 Qxg4 25.hxg4 Rd3. Mate is threatened on h3, and at the same time the bishop on c3 is hanging. Black now unleashed a terrible attack:



### 22...Rxc3!!

A magnificent sacrifice, eliminating an important white defender.

### 23.gxh4

White takes the queen, as the alternatives cannot put a smile on his face either. For example, 23.Bxc3 is not possible on account of 23...Bxe4+ 24.Qxe4 Qxh2#; and 23.Bxb7 fails to 23...Rxc3 24.Rac1 (or 24.Rf3 Rxf3 25.Bxf3 Nf2+ 26.Kg1, and now 26...Qh3! is by far the best move. The many black threats cannot be dealt with anymore) 24...Rh3, and White can no longer defend the weak point h2.

### 23...Rd2!!



Rubinstein proceeds in grand style, and delivers another blow.

### 24.Qxd2

Here is a brief summary of the alternatives, in every one of which the bishop pair emerges triumphant:

24.Bxc3 Bxe4+ 25.Qxe4 Rxc3#;

24.Qxg4 Bxe4+ 25.Rf3 Rxf3 26.Qg2 Rf1+ 27.Rxf1 Bxg2#;

24.Bxb7 Rxe2 25.Bg2 Rh3! 26.Bxh3 Rxc3#;

24.Rf2 Bxe4+ 25.Qxe4 Nxf2+ 26.Kg2 Nxe4+ 27.Kf1 Rf3+ 28.Ke1 Bf2+ 29.Kf1 Bg3+ 30.Kg1 Bxh2+ 31.Kh1 Ng3#.

### 24...Bxe4+ 25.Qg2 Rh3!

And with this exceptionally beautiful final move the black player crowns his superb combination.

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SI 41.14 – B42

**15.4 Slingerland, Fred  
Bosboom, Manuel**

Enschede 1993 (9)

IM Manuel Bosboom is a very creative player who created a furore in Holland with his blitz prowess. He reached the pinnacle of his fame by beating Kasparov during a blitz tournament on a free day at the Hoogovens tournament in Wijk aan Zee.

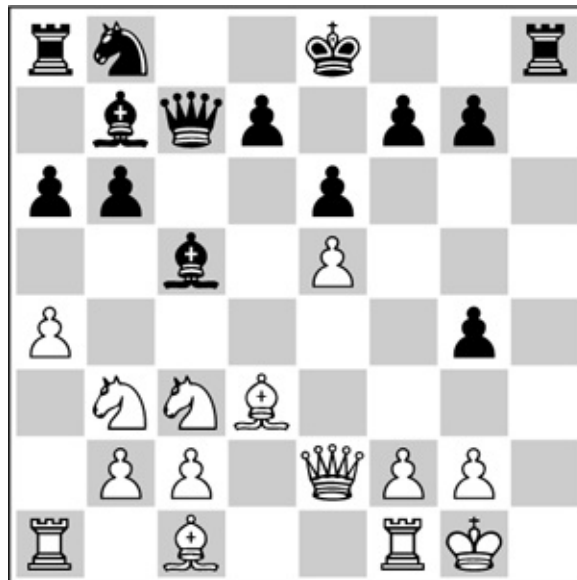
The position after

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Bd3 Nf6 6.Nc3 Qc7 7.a4 b6 8.0-0 Bb7 9.Qe2 h5 10.h3 Bc5 11.Nb3**

has been analysed at home by the black player (without a computer!). It contains an obvious combination, but the real point is astonishing.

**11...Ng4!12.hxg4 hxg4 13.e5**

So far everything is easily understandable, but now it looks as if Black has no follow-up. He must create a threat quickly, or the game will be over.



**13...Bf3!!**

Would you have found that one? The intention is to rule out the defence 14.Qxg4.

**14.gxf3?**

White caves in under the pressure, and falls victim to yet another brilliant point! In order to continue the struggle he should have played 14.Nd5, the only move.

A) Interesting is 14...exd5 15.Qd2 Qxe5 (15...Qd8 16.Qg5) 16.Re1 Be4

17.Bxe4 dxe4 18.Qf4 Qxf4 19.Bxf4 f5 20.Nxc5 bxc5 21.Rad1 Nc6 22.Rd5 g6 23.Rxc5 Rh5, and Black's position is good, but things aren't entirely clear;

B) Or 14...Bxd5?! 15.Nxc5 bxc5 16.c4 Bc6 17.Qxg4 Qxe5 18.Bf4, and the position is balanced;

C) Analogously to the game, Black could continue with 14...Qd8!, after which White must give up a piece in order not to be mated right away: 15.Nf6+ gxf6 16.Qd2 (16.gxf3? f5!, and White gets mated) 16...fxe5 17.Qg5 Qxg5 18.Bxg5 Rg8, and Black keeps a large advantage.

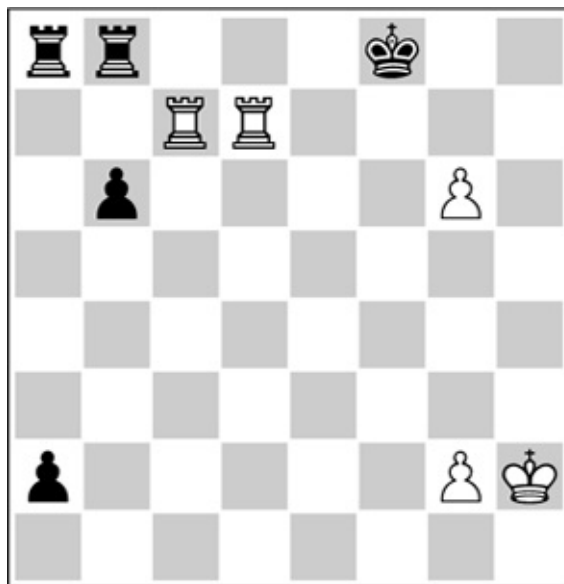
**14...Qd8!**

And White acknowledged defeat, after more than an hour's thought. The lethal threat of ...Qh4 is impossible to parry.

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## Solutions to Chapter 16

16.1



No, White does not have to settle for a draw. Although checks do not help and the mate threat after 1.Rh7? also fails to, for instance, 1...a1Q, White can still cash in the point with

**1.Rg7!!**

In fact it is quite simple. By keeping the black king imprisoned on f8, we turn the g-file into a kind of h-file, and the mate is unavoidable, for example:

**1 ...a1 Q 2.Rcf7+ Ke8 3.Rg8#**

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**16.2 Ivanchuk, Vasily**  
**Nielsen, Peter Heine**  
Skanderborg 2003 (5)



With his next move White forces the black queen to the back rank, where it will be a lot more passive than on its present square.

**32.Qe8+! Qf8**

After 32...Rxe8 33.Rxe8+ Qf8 34.Bh7+ Kxh7 35.Rxf8 f6, White wins with 36.Rf7.

**33.Qe7**

As a result, the pawn on c7 has become a target.

**33...Qxe7**

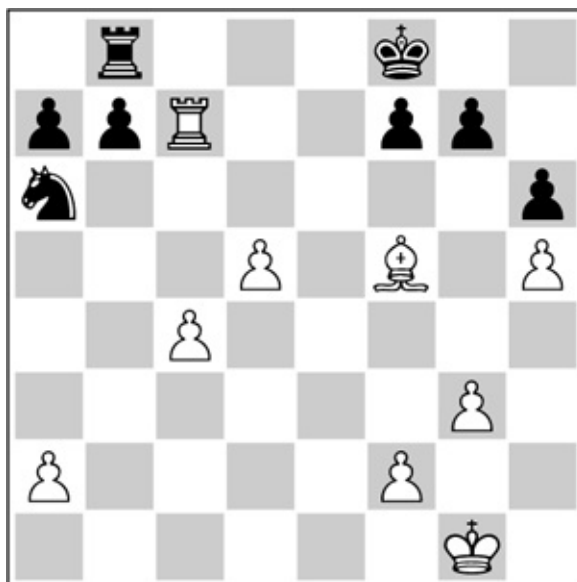
After 33...Na6 the knight would also be extremely badly placed, and White would be able to take his pick from the possibilities to increase his advantage. For example, 34.Qd7.

**34.Rxe7 Kf8?**

Black decides to give a pawn, but this action will cost him dearly. Necessary was 34...Na6, after which White does best to continue with 35.c5 (less good is 35.f4 Kf8 36.Rd7 Ke8, followed by ...Rd8, and the invaded rook will be eliminated) 35...Kf8 36.Rd7 Ke8 37.d6 c6! 38.Rc7!, keeping his opponent boxed in.

**35.Rxc7Na6**





**36.d6!**

This one Black had missed. He thought that 36.Rd7 Nc5 37.Rc7 (37.Rd6?? Ke7–h) 37...Na6 would lead to a repetition of moves.

After 36.Rc8+ Rxc8 37.Bxc8 Nc5, Black would accomplish a blockade on the dark squares. White can make no progress here.

**36...Rd8**

After 36...Nxc7, 37.dxc7 wins a piece.

**37.c5 b6 38.c6!**

Now White makes optimum use of his passed pawns.

**38...Nb8**

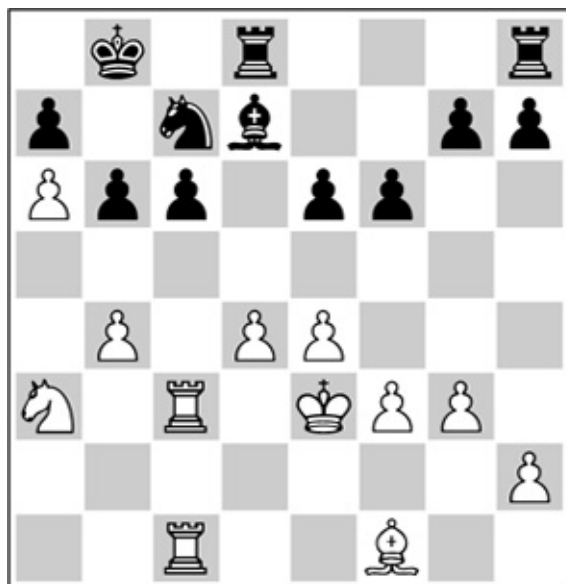
After 38...Rxd6, 39.Rxa7 is decisive.

**39.Be4 Rxd6 40.Rc8+**

**1-0**

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**16.3 Botvinnik,Mikhail  
Vidmar,Milan**  
Groniagen 1946 (5)



The only way to make progress is:

**31.b5!**

This pawn sacrifice looks logical, but the consequences had to be calculated accurately.

**31...Nxb5 32.Bxb5!**

White captures with the bishop, as he wants to keep his knight on the board. The reason will soon become clear.

**32...cxb5 33.Rc7**

The first aim, to penetrate with the rook on the seventh rank, is achieved. Still, Black's next move appears to spoil the fun.

**33...Rc8**

Thus Black seems to be able to neutralize the white rooks, and the white concept appears to be a failure. Nothing could be further from the truth!

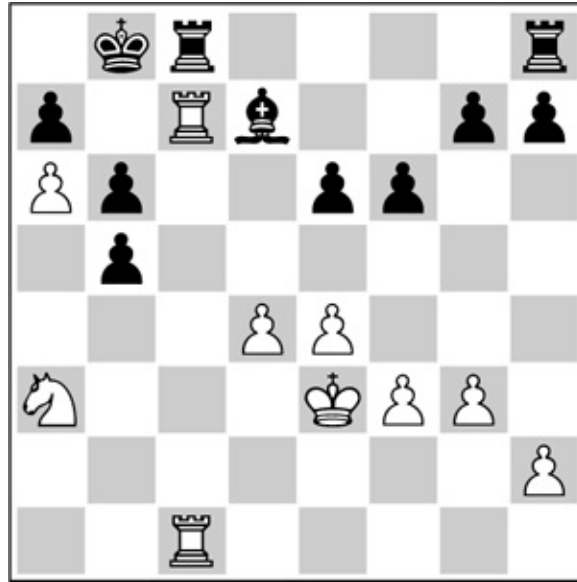
By the way, there were various other possibilities for Black, all of which could be successfully combated by White:

A) 33...Ka8 34.Rb7 Bc8 is met by the attractive 35.Rxc8+! Rxc8 36.Nxb5, and White wins;

B) On 33... b4, two white rooks will invade on the seventh rank: 34.Rb7+ Ka8 35.Rcc7! Bc8 (or 35...bxa3 – we know by now that the presence of a rook's pawn offers the necessary point of support to give mate: 36.Rxa7+ Kb8 37.Rcb7+ Kc8 38.Ra8#) 36.Rxa7+ Kb8 37.Nb5, and here also there are pretty mate patterns, like, for instance: 37...b3 38.Rcb7+ Bxb7 39.Rxb7+, and

wherever the king goes, the knight will give mate;

C) An important defence consisted of 33...Bc8! 34.Nxb5 Rd7!! (less good is 34...Bxa6 35.Nxa7 Bb7 36.Nb5 Rc8 (36...Ba6 37.R7c6!) 37.Kd2 Rxc7 (37...Ba6 38.R1c6+-) 38.Nxc7 Bc8 39.d5 exd5 (39...Rd8 40.Rc6 exd5 41.Nxd5 Ka7 42.Rc7+ Bb7 43.Rxg7+-) 40.Nxd5 b5 41.Rc7, and White has excellent winning chances) 35.Rxd7 Bxd7 36.Nxa7 Kxa7 37.Rc7+ Kxa6 38.Rxd7 Rc8=.



**34.Rb7+ Ka8 35.Rxd7!**

This is the true point of the entire liquidation. White sacrifices an exchange, after which his rook on the seventh rank, in cooperation with the knight, is of great value.

**35...Rxc1 36.Nxb5 Rhc8**

Or 36...Kb8 37.Rb7+ Ka8 (37...Kc8 38.Nd6+ Kd8 39.Nf7+ Kc8 40.Nxh8) 38.Nc7+.

**37.Rxg7**

The rook is wreaking havoc on the seventh rank.

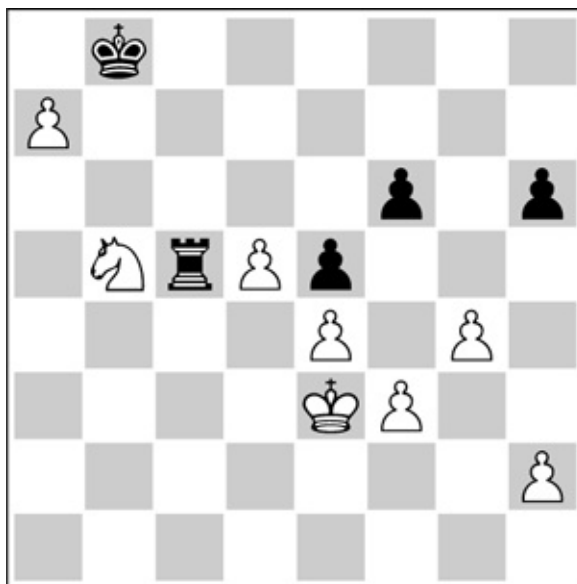
**37...h6 38.Rxa7+ Kb8 39.Rb7+ Ka8 40.Ra7+ Kb8 41.Rb7+ Ka8 42.g4**

This illustrates Black's powerlessness. The rooks are more or less tied to the c-file (otherwise White will have Nc7+), which allows White to take his time to strengthen his position.

**42...e5 43.d5 R1c5 44.Ra7+ Kb8 45.Rb7+ Ka8 46.Rxb6 Rb8 47.Rxb8+**

Remarkably enough, White can even permit himself to swap the rooks. This is because his two passed pawns, in combination with the knight and the king, have enough concentrated power to force the win.

**47...Kxb8 48.a7+**



#### **48...Kb7**

Also after 48...Ka8 49.d6 Rc8 50.Kd3 (50.Nc7+ Kxa7 51.Ne6 Rc3+!) 50...Kb7 (50...Rc1 51.Nc3) 51.Nc7 Kxa7 52.Kc4, White wins on account of his far advanced passed pawn.

#### **49.Nd6+**

Another possibility was 49.d6!?, which after 49...Rc8 50.Kd3 Rc1 51.Nc3 Ra1 52.Nd5! would also lead to a winning position for White.

#### **49...Kxa7 50.Ne8?!**

With the alternative 50.Nf7, conquering the black h-pawn, the win could be attained a little easier. For example: 50...Rc7 51.Nxh6 Rh7 52.Ng8 Rxh2 53.Nxf6.

#### **50...Kb6 51.Nxf6 Rc3+ 52.Kf2 Rc7 53.h4 Rf7 54.Nh5 Kc7**

Three pawns and a knight outweigh a rook.

#### **55.g5**

Even stronger was 55.f4! exf4 56.g5.

#### **55...hxf5 56.hxf5 Rh7 57.Nf6 Rh2+ 58.Kg3 Rh1 59.Kg2 Rh8 60.g6**

Black gave up the fight, since after 60...Rh6 61.g7 Rg6+ 62.Kf2 Rxg7 63.Ne8+, he will be tricked to boot!

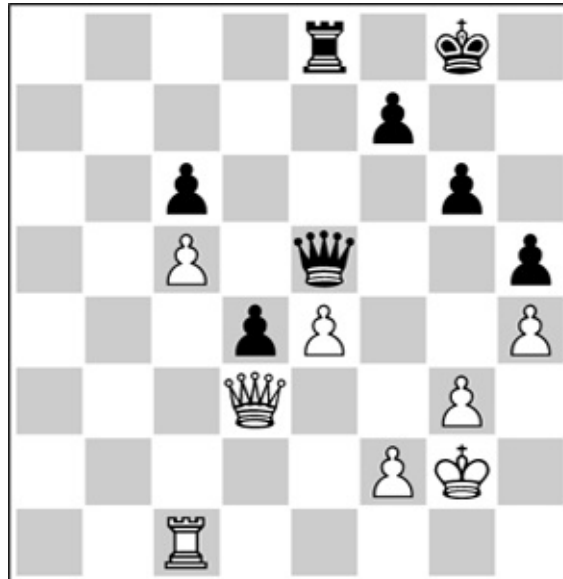
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## 16.4 Taimanov, Mark

Bxg5

Timmanjan

Wijk aan Zee 1981 (10)



### 34.f3?

This is a serious positional mistake, with which White weakens his second rank – running the risk that Black can exploit this weakness, especially in an ending with major pieces.

White had to try 34.Rc4, in an attempt to save a draw in the resulting rook ending. After 34...Qxe4+ 35.Qxe4 Rxe4 36.f3! (if anything, this is better than 36.Kf3?! Re5 37.Rxd4 Rxc5, and Black has good practical chances) 36...Re2+ 37.Kf1 Re5 38.Rxd4 Rxc5 39.Kf2, Black's winning chances are minimal.

### 34...Ra8 35.Qc4

Also after two other possibilities Taimanov would have had huge problems, as Timman showed in the Dutch magazine *Schaakbulletin*:

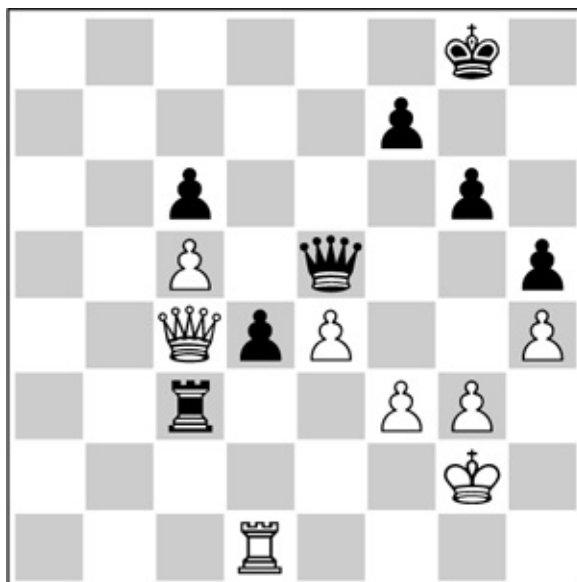
A) 35.f4 Ra2+ 36.Rc2 Ra3!, and whether White takes the queen or the rook, he will be left with a ruined position;

B) 35.Rc4 Ra2+ 36.Rc2 Ra1 37.Rc4 Qb8!, and the two black pieces stage an attack on the white king that is impossible to parry.

### 35...Ra3!?

Again the d-pawn is sacrificed for the attack on the second rank.

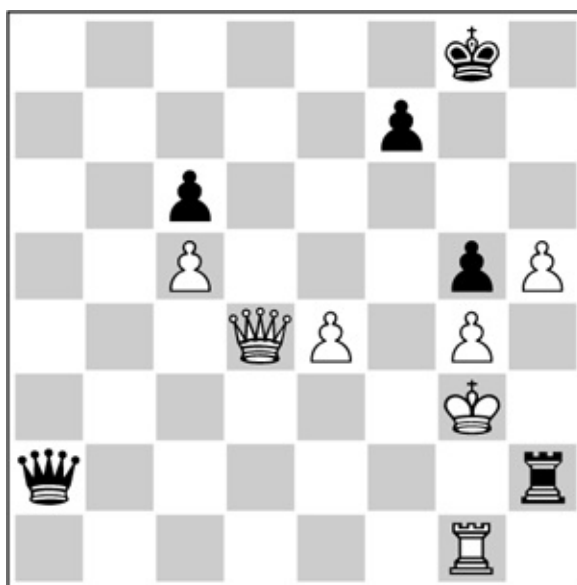
### 36.Rd1 Rc3



### 37.Qa4?

This is based on an ugly miscalculation. With hindsight, the only move turns out to be 37.Qxd4!?. After 37...Rc2+ 38.Kh3 Qe6+ 39.g4 hxg4+ 40.fxg4 Qa2, White miraculously does not lose:

A) 41.h5? is strongly met by 41...g5! 42.Rg1 Rh2+43.Kg3



Analysis diagram

43...Rb2!. It is a beautiful sight how the black pieces carry out their destructive work from a great distance: 44.Kh3 Rb3+ 45.Rg3 Rb1 46.Rg1 Qa3+ 47.Rg3 (47.Kh2 Rb3) 47...Qc1, and the black initiative emerges victorious;

B) 41.Qd6, and now it turns out that 41...Rf2! wins for Black, for example:

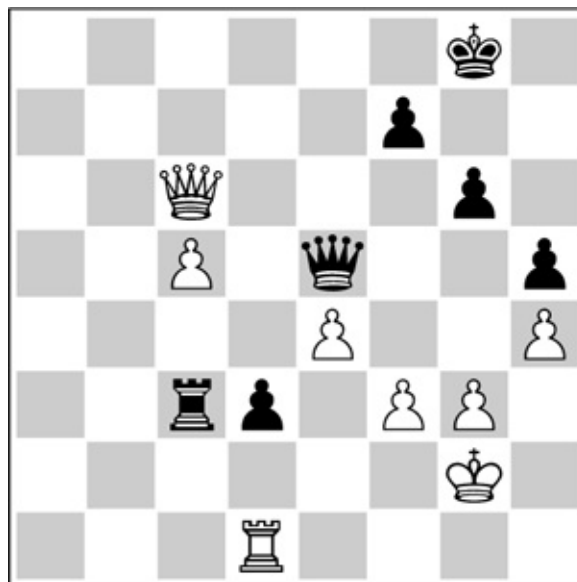
42.Kg3 Qe2 43.Qd3 Rg2+ 44.Kf4 Rxc4+, and White can forget about the rest;

C) White has only one good move: 41.e5!. This move, which isn't exactly obvious, is not analysed by Timman. The intention is to give extra protection to the g4 pawn, which is always a target. 41...Rh2+ (41...Kh7 does not achieve the aim either: 42.h5 Rh2+ 43.Kg3 gxc5 44.Kf4 hxc4 45.Rg1 Rh5 46.Qd3+ Kh6 47.Qd6+ Kh7, and since his own king is now unsafe as well, Black cannot play for a win) 42.Kg3 Qg2+ (42...Rg2+ 43.Kh3 Qe2 appears to win on the spot, but, remarkably enough, White can save his skin with 44.h5!) 43.Kf4, and oddly enough, also here there is nothing in it for Black.

**37...d3!**

'This push not only prepares a rook check on c2, it also clears the way to b2 for the black queen', Timman writes.

**38.Qxc6**



**38...Rxc5?**

Timman was in time-trouble, which is why he decided first to eliminate the dangerous white c-pawn. But this endangers the win.

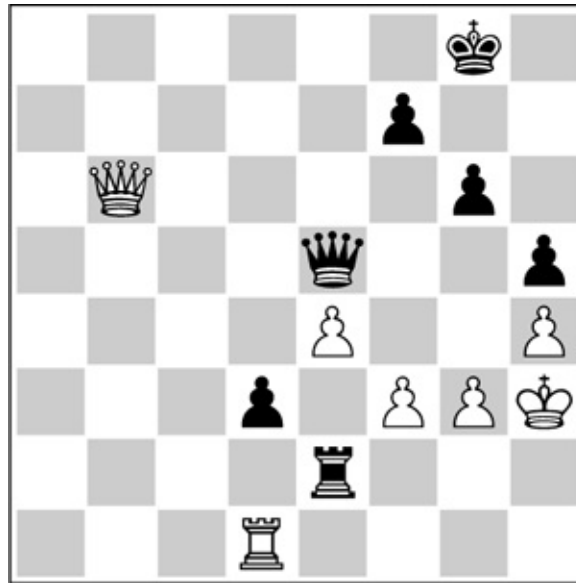
An immediate win could have been achieved with the spectacular 38...Rc1!.

After 39.Rxc1 Qb2+ 40.Kh3 Qxc1 41.g4 Qf4! 42.Qe8+ Kg7, the active position of the black queen, in combination with the strong d-pawn and White's seriously weakened king position, decide the battle in Black's favour.

Timman thought that the mate threat after 38...Rc2+ 39.Kh3 Qb2 40.Rh1 would not yield anything concrete at this stage. However, the black passed pawn will decide the issue. After 40...d2, followed by ...Rc1, the promotion of the pawn cannot be prevented.

**39.Qa8+**

The only way to stay on his feet was 39.Qb6!, so as at least to prevent Black's queen from going to the second rank, and to control the square e6 at the same time (Taimanov, for one, claimed after the game that he could have made a draw with 39.Qb6): 39...Rc2+ 40.Kh3. In that case, Timman would have had to find the pointed 40...Re2! on the last move of the time control, in order to bring the win within reach after all. With this move he brings the rook to the other side of the pawn, and keeps the second rank open for the time being.



A) On 41.Rxd3, 41...Qa1 42.Qd8+ Kh7 43.Rd1 Qa2 decides. Again White's second rank proves fatal to him: 44.g4 Rg2! 45.Qf6 hxg4+ 46.fxg4 Rf2 47.Qd4 Rf3#;

B) 41.Qd8+ Kg7 42.Qxd3, but now the danger comes from the other side: 42...Qe6+! 43.g4 hxg4+, and the grave can be dug for White;

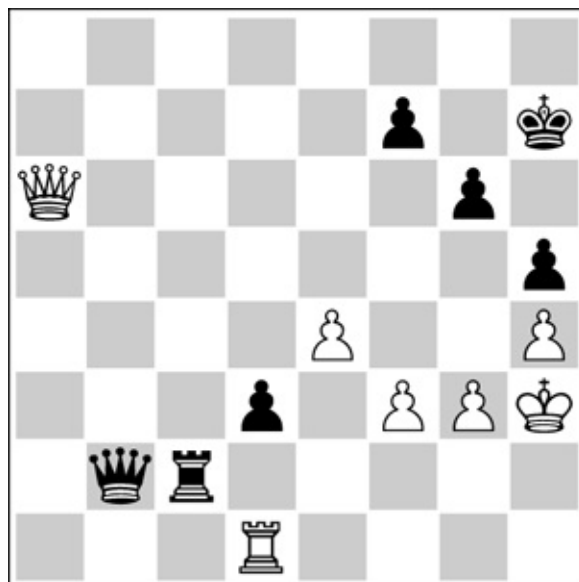
C) 41.Qb3 looks clever, as both b2 and e6 remain under control, but Black again has an instructive way to win: 41...Qc5! (the queen threatens to do her demolition job not only via f2, but also via c8) 42.Qb8+ Kg7 43.g4 hxg4+ 44.Kxg4 d2.

**39...Kh7 40.Qa6**

Protecting the square a6, but allowing an invasion on the second rank.

**40...Rc2+41.Kh3 Qb2**





The game was adjourned here, but as Timman was writing down the sealed move, Taimanov resigned.

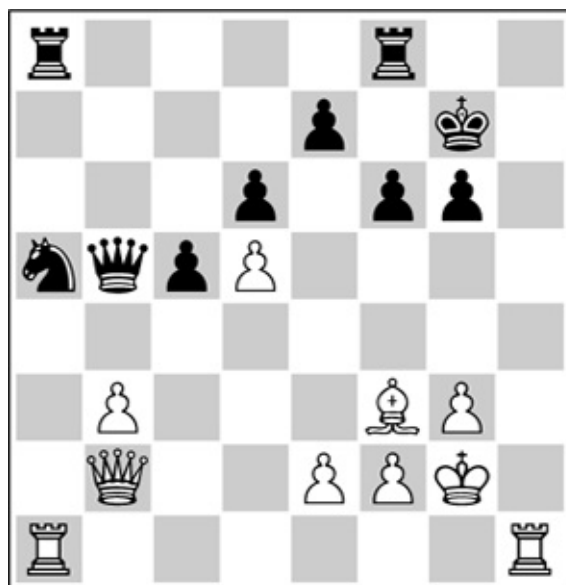
After 42.Rh1, Timman indicated that 42...Rc1 was the road to the win, liquidating to a queen ending where the d-pawn decides. Following 43.Rxc1 (43.Rh2 Qd4) 43...Qxc1 44.g4 hxg4+ 45.Kxg4 d2 46.Qb7 Kg7, the pawn indeed cannot be stopped.

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## Solutions to Chapter 17

### 17.1 Keres,Paul Szabo,Laszlo

Hastings 1954/55



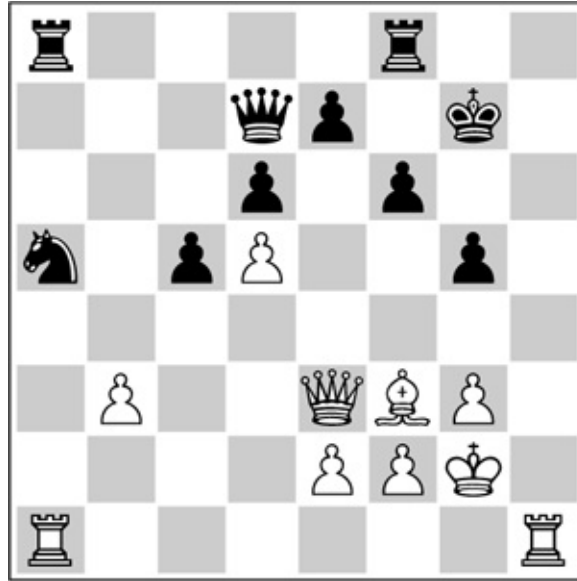
Since the black knight cannot be deployed quickly on the kingside, White focuses on that side of the board. With his next move the white queen threatens to invade on h6, and it keeps an eye on the unfortunate horse. At the same time the queen strives for the square e3, since Black has several ugly weaknesses on the e-file.

#### 1.Qd2! g5

After 1...Rh8, it becomes clear how important it is that the white queen keeps covering a5: 2.Rxh8 Kxh8 (2...Rxh8 3.Qxa5) 3.Qh6+. Now the blow falls on the kingside: 3...Kg8 4.Qxg6+ Kf8 5.Rh1, with inevitable mate.

#### 2.Qe3 Qd7

Not a good alternative is 2...Ra7 3.Qe4 f5 4.Qe6 g4 (4...Rf6 5.Qc8 Rf8 6.Rh7+! Kxh7 7.Qxf8), after which the quickest road to the win is as follows: 5.Rh5! gxf3+ 6.exf3, and the black king falls prey to White's 'hungry' major pieces.



### **3.Bg4!**

This is the way to disturb the proceedings at Black's end. There was also nothing against continuing with 3.Qd3 Rh8 4.Rxh8 Kxh8 (4...Rxh8 5.Rxa5 would cost a piece) 5.Rh1+, and Black gets mated: 5...Kg7 6.Rh7+ Kf8 7.Rh8+ Kg7 8.Qh7#.

### **3...Qc7**

It is important that after 3...Qxg4 4.Qxe7+ Rf7, White has the trick 5.Rh7+!: 5...Kxh7 6.Qxf7+, and that's settled.

### **4.Bf5 Kf7**

After 4...Rh8, 5.Qe6! brings the win within reach.

Equivalent is 5.Rxh8 Rxh8 6.Rxa5 Qxa5 7.Qxe7+ Kh6 8.Qxf6+ with mate next move.

### **5.Rh7+ Ke8 6.Rah1**

In itself there is nothing wrong with this move. Only, the strong chess engines prefer 6.Qe6 or 6.Rg7.

### **6...Qb7 7.Rh8**

And Black resigned.

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**17.2 Grooten, Herman**  
**Cuijpers, Frans**  
 Dieren 1979 (3)



White wants to transfer the battlefield to the kingside. He does this because Black has two pieces (the knight on a7 and the bishop on c5) that will not be able to exert any influence there. Therefore, he does not allow Black to get rid of one of his misplaced pieces.

**13.Ne2! f6**

Sooner or later Black has to commit this weakening. Now White has obtained a target for a pawn storm. First he brings the rest of his pieces into the game.

**14.Nf4**

Here the knight is beautifully placed.

**14...Bd7 15.Be2**

White could have considered making use of the strong point that has become available. If Black is forced to give up his light-squared bishop, White has nice compensation. An illustrative variation: 15.Ne6!? Bxe6 16.Qxe4 Rae8 17.dxe6 c6 18.Qc2 Kh8 (18...Qxe6 19.Bc4 d5 20.Bd3) 19.Bc4d5 20.Bd3g6 21.b4Bd6 22.h4, with beautiful compensation.

**15...c6 16.h4Kf7**

The king runs for it, as there is nothing sensible to be found against the simple plan of g2-g4, Rh1-g1, Qc2-c3 and g4-g5, after which the superior numbers of white pieces will decide the game quickly. After 16...Rf7 White will continue on the chosen path: 17.g4 Nb5 18.Rg1 Nc7 19.Bc4 b5 20.dxc6 bxc4 21.cxd7 cxb3 22.Qxb3 Qxd7 23.g5 fxg5 24.Rxg5, and White is doing fine.

**17.g4 Ke8 18.Rg1 Kd8 19.g5**

Also without the presence of the enemy king White's plan is successful.

### **19...Kc7?**

An error in a bad position. Incidentally, Black faced a well nigh impossible task to keep the intruders from his territory. The main threat, 20.gxf6 gxf6 21.Nh5, intending 22.Rg7, cannot be dealt with in a satisfactory way.



### **20.b4?!**

The right idea – in the wrong move order. It is a pity that White does not take full profit from the opportunity presented to him. Now Black can still try some 'swindles'. White should have inserted 20.gxf6 gxf6 here, but 20.g6! is absolutely the strongest move. After 20...h6 the blow is dealt on the other side: 21.b4!.

### **20...axb4 21.axb4 fxg5 22.Rxg5**

Probably 22.bxc5! would have been immediately decisive. After 22...gxf4 23.Rxg7 Qe8 24.cxd6+ Kb8 25.Bd4 Nc8 26.Rxa8+ Kxa8 27.Qa2+ Kb8 28.dxc6 Bxc6 29.Bg4!, Black's house comes tumbling down.

### **22...Rxf4!?**

After 22...Bxb4 White wins a piece, since both cxd7+ and Nd5+ are threatened. Now Black can play on by sacrificing an exchange.

### **23.exf4 Bxb4 24.Rxg7 Qxh4 25.Qxe4**

White opts for centralization. More to the point was 25.dxc6 bxc6 26.Qa4 Bc5 27.Qa5+ Bb6 28.Rxd7+, and it is all over.

### **25...Bc5 26.Bg4 Qxf2+ 27.Kd1 Rd8 28.Bf6!**

Putting the question to the most important defender.

### **28...Rf8 29.Rxd7+ Kb8 30.Qa4?**

Very careless. White could have crowned his attacking game fittingly with

30.Rxb7+!! Kxb7 31.Qe7+ Kb6 32.Qxa7+ Kb5 33.Qa6+ Kb4 34.Rb1#.

**30...Qg1+ 31.Kc2 Qxg4 32.dxc6!**

Now the game is over after all. Therefore, Black resigned. After 32...Qf5+ 33.d3 bxc6 34.Rb1+ Ka8 35.Rxa7+ Bxa7, White gives mate with 36.Qxc6#.

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### 17.3 Timmanjan Kuzubov, Yury

Gothenburg Ech-tt 2005 (2)



By pushing his d-pawn to d6, White has seriously impeded Black's development.

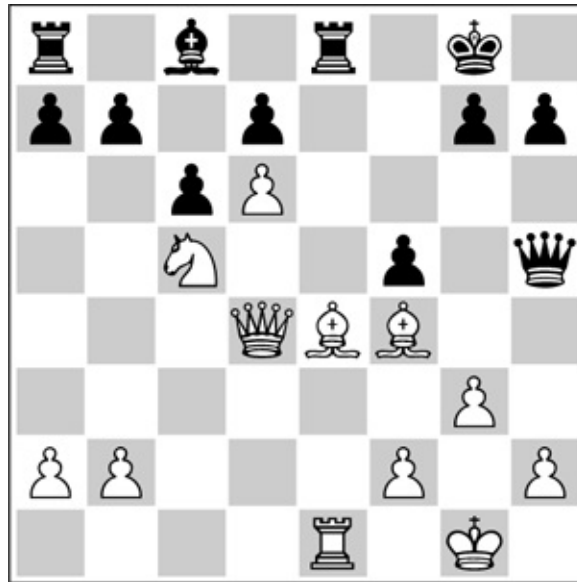
The pawn cuts the black position into two camps, as a result of which the latter's piece coordination has been completely disrupted. In order to exploit Black's lack of activity, White must continue powerfully.

#### **25.Na4!**

Threatening the strongly placed black knight. The most important guideline that White is following is to trade off the opponent's active pieces, leaving him with nothing but passive ones.

#### **25...f5**

A principal variation that had to be calculated is 25...Ba5 26.Qxd4 Bxe1 27.Rxe1 f5 28.Nc5 Re8 (on 28...fxe4 White has 29.Nxe6dxe6 30.d7+-).

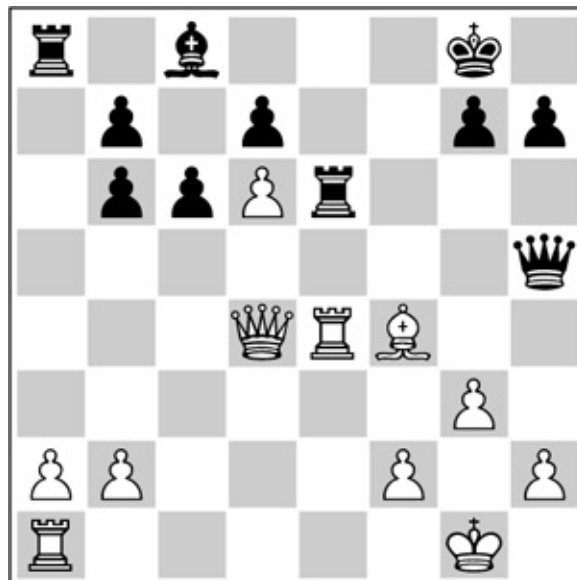


Analysis diagram

And now the beautiful 29.Bd5+! exd5 30.Re7 Rxe7 (30...Qg6 does not offer any solace either after 31.Qxd5+ Kh8 32.Nd3!, and the difference in activity decides) 31.dxe7 d6 32.Qxd5+ Kh8 33.Qxd6 Qe8 34.Qd8, and White wins.

**26.Nxb6 fxe4 27.Qxd4 axb6 28.Rxe4**

Although the position is materially balanced, White is clearly better. This is mainly caused by the misplacing of Black's pieces on the queenside, especially the bishop on c8. For the time being, the pawn on d6 prevents this bishop from being brought into play.



**28...Qc5**



Also after 28...c5 29.Qd3 Qf5 30.Rae1, White holds all the trumps.

### **29.Qd3!**

White should not follow his guideline at all times. Flexible thinking always remains essential on the rocky road to success. The exchange of queens and rooks would not yield White what he has in mind: 29.Qxc5 bxc5 30.Rxe6 dxe6 31.Be5, and although White's bishop is still stronger than Black's, Black has managed to untie himself a little. Also, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops increases the drawing margin.

### **29...Qf5 30.Rae1 Ra4**

After 30...Rxa2 31.R1e3!, with the threat 32.Rxe6, White maintains his advantage.

### **31.f3h5**

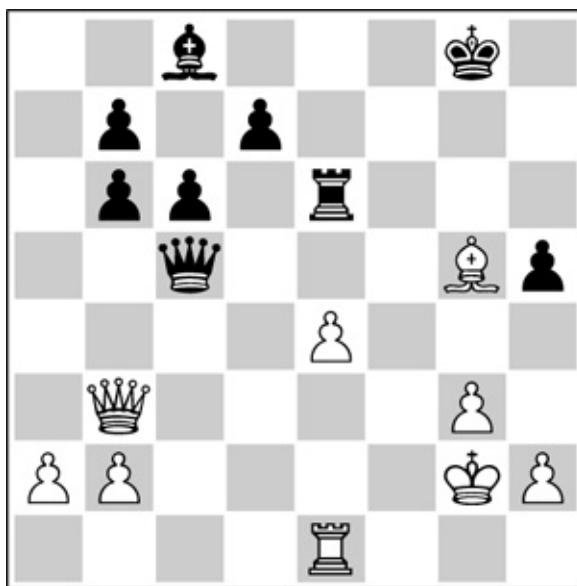
Now, after 31...Rxa2, White should react with 32.Qb3.

### **32.Qb3 Rxe4 33.fxe4 Qc5+ 34.Kg2 g5?!**

It is understandable that Black tries to get rid of the pawn on d6, which has been a thorn in his flesh for so long. However, the weaknesses on the king-side are irreparable, and Timman succeeds in exploiting them in a beautiful manner. The alternative 34...b5 is met by 35.e5, with which Black is hemmed in even further.

### **35.Be3 Qxd6 36.Bxg5 Qc5**

If he had known how White would continue here, he would have played 36...Qd4.



### **37.Bf6!**

An outstanding square for the bishop.

### **37...d5**

Finally the bishop on c8 comes to life, but it is too late.

### **38.e5Qd4?**

Now events will unfold quickly. An attempt at defence was 38...Qc4 39.Qxb6 Re8 40.Qe3 Qg4, and now the prophylactic 41.Kg1!, preparing, among others, Rf1 (without allowing the queen swap on e4), whereas 38...Bd7 is met by 39.Qd3 Be8 40.Qf5.

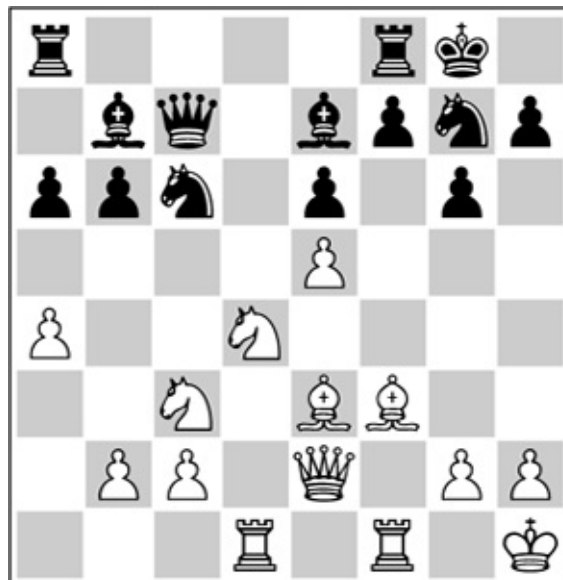
### **39.Qc2**

Since Black cannot defend against the annoying threats White has created, he resigned. Curiously, his bishop is still on its original square c8!

A possible finish is: 39.Qc2 Kf8 40.Qg6 Qxb2+ 41.Kf1 Qb5+ 42.Re2, and White wins.

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**17.4 Geller,Efim**  
**Mikhalchishin, Adrian**  
 Tbilisi ch-URS 1978 (7)



White has set his sights on the black knight on g7, which wants to jump powerfully to f5. He starts with a cleaning operation.

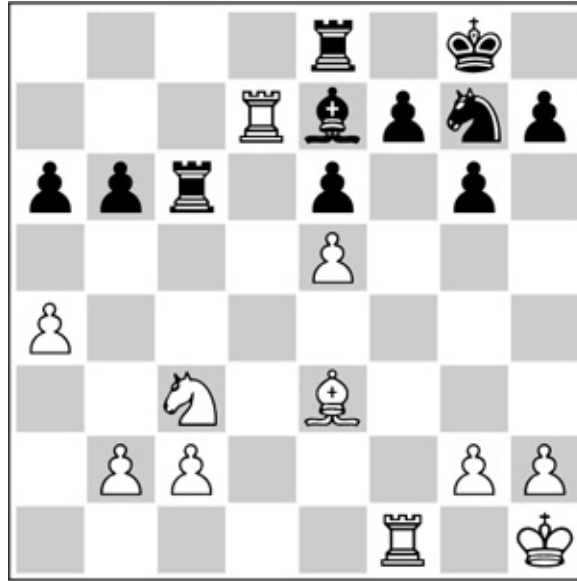
**17.Nxc6! Bxc6 18.Qc4!**

White wants to trade off Black's active pieces, leaving Black with only a few passive ones.

**18...Rfc8**

After this move White will get what he wants. With the intermediate move 18... Nf5!? Black could have tried to put a spoke in White's wheels. After 19.Be1 Rac8 20.Qxc6 Qxc6 21.Bxc6 Rxc6, there is a more or less forced variation which favours White: 22.g4 Nh4 (after 22...Ng7, the same nightmare as in the game would loom up before the black player's eyes!) 23.Rd7 Re8 24.Rxe7 Rxe7 25.Bg5, and White gains two pieces for a rook. Whether he can actually win this remains questionable after 25...Rd7 26.Bxh4Rc4 27.h3 h5.

**19.Qxc6 Qxc6 20.Bxc6 Rxc6 21.Rd7 Re8**



**22.g4!**

This is what the white player had been aiming for all along. The knight on g7 cannot actively take part in the struggle.

**22...h5 23.h3 hxg4 24.hxg4**

b5 An attempt at counterplay. The alternative is 24...Rc4, but then White simply plays 25.Bd4, maintaining his advantage.

**25.axb5axb5 26.Ne4!?**

Geller has calculated that he will win material. Also after 26.Nxb5 Rxc2 27.Nd6 Bxd6 28.exd6, Black would have had hardly any prospects.

**26...Rxc2 27.Nf6+ Bxf6 28.exf6**

The black knight is marked for death, and this means that White can cash in.

**28...Rxb2**

Black could have put up some stiffer resistance with 28...Nf5 29.gxf5 exf5, but after 30.Rf2 Rxf2 31.Bxf2, he would not be able to save his skin either.

**29.fxg7f5**

This way it looks as if Black can flounder on a little longer, but Geller has looked further than the end of his nose.

**30.Rf3! fxg4 31.Rf4 Rc8 32.Bc5!**

With this beautiful final move, reducing all counterplay to zero and at the same time introducing the deadly threat Rf8+, Geller forced his opponent to capitulate.

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## Solutions to Chapter 19

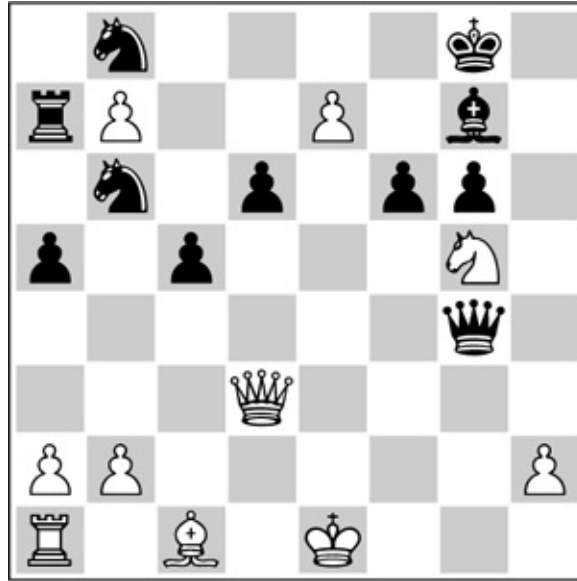
19.1 Grooten,Herman  
Philippe,Christophe  
1998



### 21.Qb5!

White makes optimum use of the lack of cooperation in the black camp.

An even more incredible turn is 21.g4!!.. If you have thought up this one, you can write down a few bonus points! The queen is the most important defender of the black king, and it is now lured away from its most important tasks: 21...Qxg4 22.Nf6+! (the consequence of the previous move) 22...exf6 (22...Bxf6 leads to mate: 23.Qxg6+ Bg7 24.Qf7+ Kh8 25.Qe8+Bf8 26.Qxf8#) 23.e7.



Analysis diagram

This move is the real point of the combination: thanks to the unfortunate positions of the black pieces, the pawn breaks through. Please note how important the pawn on b7 is: it keeps the rook inactive for a little longer.

23...Qd7.

Senseless would be 23...Qg1+ 24.Qf1 Qxf1+ 25.Kxf1, and the pawn can no longer be kept from promotion.

24.Qe4!. In this way White not only protects the pawn, but he also threatens to queen again. 24...Qe8 25.Qe6+ Kh8 26.Qh3+ Kg8 27.Qh7# would be a fitting conclusion to a highly original combination.

**21...Rxb7**

Otherwise Black will lose a knight.

**22.Qe8+**

The white queen pays a visit via the back door.

**22...Bf8**

After 22...Qf8 23.Qxg6, the white queen has managed to get hold of the g6 pawn by means of a detour. Now, in the event of 23...Qc8, White has to look for an optimum cooperation between his pieces.

24.Ng3! turns out to be the cleverest continuation. After 24...Nc6 25.Nf5, the mate is unavoidable.

**23.g4!**

This move wasn't hard to find.

**23...Qe5**

After 24.Qf7+Kh8 25.Qh7#, it's mate!

**1-0**

**Back**

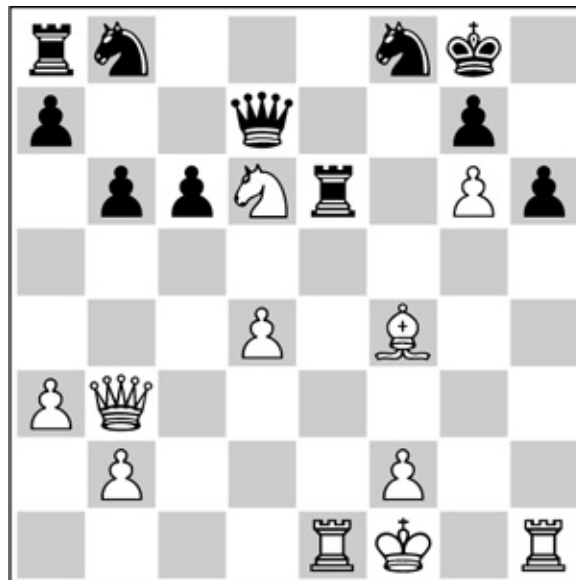
**19.2 Botvinnik,Mikhail**  
**Smyslov,Vasily**  
 Moscow Wch-m 1954 (2)



If a knight has invaded the enemy position, we speak of an ‘octopus’. Here, the knight on d6 spreads its ‘tentacles’ in enemy territory.

**18.d5!**

The line 18.g6 fxg6 19.hxg6 h6 20.Qb3 Nf8 21.Re1 was also definitely worthy of attention. Now, in two variations White conjures up a miraculous form of cooperation: 21...Qd7



Analysis diagram



22.Rxe6 Nxe6 (22...Qxe6 23.Nf5!! Qxb3 24.Ne7+ Kh8 25.Rxh6+ gxh6 26.Be5#) 23.Bxh6!! A sound thrashing! And now:

A) 23...Qxd6 runs into 24.Bg5!. The bishop covers the important escape square e7, after which the blow falls along the h-file: 24...Qd5 25.Rh8+! Kxh8 26.Qh3+ Kg8 27.Qh7+ Kf8 28.Qh8#;

B) 23...gxh6 24.Nf5!. Again the knight emerges on this beautiful square. Together with the pawn on g6 the knight covers four crucial squares on the seventh rank, again preventing Black defending against the invasion along the h-file. For example: 24...Na6 25.Qh3, and Black cannot meet the threat of 26.Qxh6 anymore.

### **18...Rxd6**

A desperate sacrifice with which Black hopes to stay in the game.

### **19.Bxd6 Qxg5 20.Qf3!?**

Even better was 20.Rc1!, bringing his last piece into the game. This would also have preserved the pressure.

### **20...Qxd5**

Black decides to trade queens. But as a result, he is left with only passive pieces that are in each other's way as well. Still, keeping the queens on the board wouldn't exactly have brought any relief either: 20...cxd5 21.Rg1 and now:

A) With 21...Qd2 the queen will land on the wrong track. White then has an ingenious winning method at his disposal: 22.Rd1 Qc2 23.Rxd5 Qc4+ 24.Kg2 Nc6 25.b3 (here the queen definitively falls into decline) 25...Qc2 (now White has a highly instructive winning method, gaining material. But after 25...Qa6 26.Rg5 Qb7 27.Rxg7+! Black ends up in a mating net: 27...Kxg7 28.Kh2+ and game over) 26.Rd4! (threatening 27.Rc4) 26...b5 27.Re4! and the threat of 28.Re2, catching the queen, can only be prevented by 27...h6, but then there follows 28.Re2 Qh7 29.Qxc6, after which it is also over;

B) After 21...Qd8, White brings his armed forces into play in no time with 22.Qxd5 Na6 and 23.Re1. The black pieces are not in a position to prevent a final offensive, for example: 23...Nf6 24.Rxg7+! Kxg7 25.Qg5+ Kh8 26.Be5 and it is all over.

### **21.Qxd5cxd5 22.Rc1**

Of course, White prevents the knight from being developed to a central square.

### **22...Na6 23.b4!**

Keeping the black pieces tied up. The knight on a6 has become Black's main source of worry.

### **23...h6 24.Rh3 Kh7 25.Rd3 Nf6 26.b5**

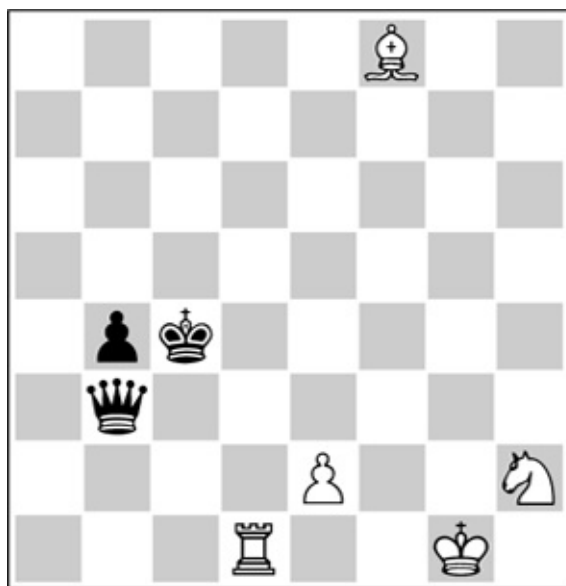
White decides to win back a pawn, after which the win becomes a technical job.

### **26...Nc5 27.Bxc5 bxc5 28.Rxc5 Rb8 29.a4Rb7 30.Rdc3**

And since the rook swap is inevitable, Black surrendered. It is clear that 30... Ne4 is met by 31.Rc7.

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### 19.3 Study by Kasparian, 1977



White has to find a way to make his pieces cooperate. He starts by sacrificing a rook!

**1.Rd4+!**

Tempting was 1.Rc1+?, but after 1...Kb5 2.Rc5+ Ka4 3.Rf5 Qg3+ 4.Kh1 b3, the danger for Black is over. Also after 1.Rd3? Qb2 2.Kf2 Qf6+ 3.Rf3 Qd4+ 4.Kg2 b3, White cannot do business.

**1...Kxd4**

Black has to capture, since after 1...Kb5 2.Rxb4+ it would be very easy for White.

**2.Nf3+Kd5**

The only way to avoid direct knight forks. After both 2...Ke3 3.Bh6+ Kxe2 (3...Ke4 4.Nd2+) 4.Nd4+ and 2...Kc3 3.Bg7+ Kc2 (3...Kc4 4.Nd2+) 4.Nd4+, he will be treated to a knight fork.

**3.e4+**

But White is not to be caught out so easily. The black king is now driven to a fatal square where it falls victim to a fork after all.

**3...Kc6**

3...Ke6 4.Nd4+; 3...Kxe4 4.Nd2+ ; 3...Kc4 4.Nd2+.

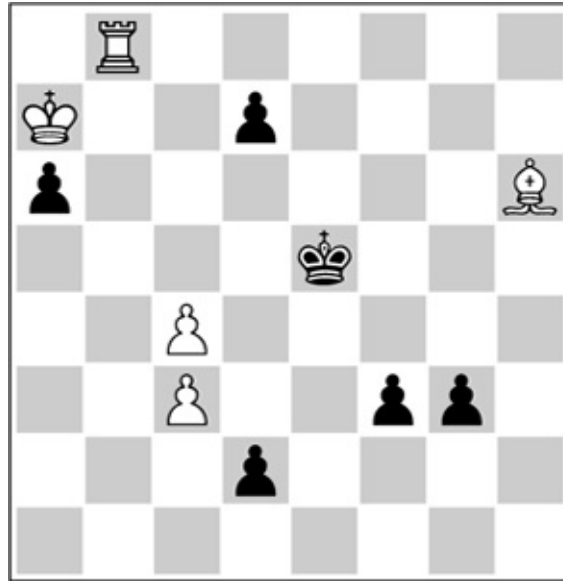
**4.Nd4+**

**1-0**

Curiously, the knight that was so far away on h2 in the starting position, now plays the starring role in the final position!

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## 19.4 Study by Rinck, 1908



White eliminates a pawn that has broken through, but then faces two others.

**1.Bxd2 f2!**

As a rule, two pawns on the sixth rank outweigh a rook.

**2.Be1!**

A beautiful idea.

**2...f1Q**

Clearly, 2...fxe1Q fails to the X-Ray check 3.Re8+.

**3.Re8+ Kd6**

For obvious reasons, the king cannot move to the f-file.

**4.Bxg3+**

But in the centre it will end up in a mating net.

**4...Kc5 5.Rc8#**

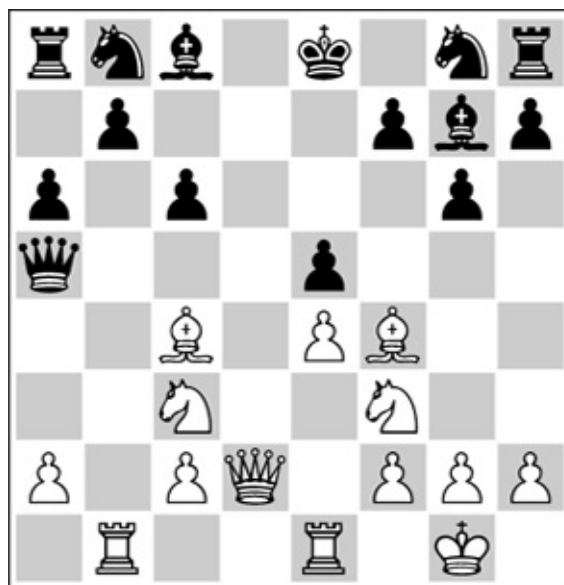
A true masterpiece by Rinck, where the control of squares is combined with marvellous cooperation of the white pieces.

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## Solutions to Chapter 20

### 20.1 Tal, Mikhail Tringov, Georgy

Amsterdam izt 1964 (23)



In this position Tal played

#### **13.Qd6!**

exploiting his lead in development. The former World Champion forces his opponent to take one of the two pieces, since with his last move he has created a few nasty threats (Nc3-d5!).

#### **13...Qxc3**

Capturing the bishop will end badly for the black player: 13...exf4 14.Nd5! Nd7 (14...cxd5? 15.exd5+, and after the opening of the e-file Black will not be able to hold; or 14...b5 15.Nc7+, and again White wins on the spot) 15.Ng5!



Analysis diagram

15...Ne5 (after 15...Be5? White gives mate in three: 16.Nc7+ Qxc7 (16...Kd8 17.Nxf7#) 17.Bxf7+ Kd8 18.Ne6#) 16.Nc7+ Qxc7 17.Qxc7, and White has gained back his material with interest.

It looks logical to erect a 'wall' on which White can try to bang his head with 13...f6, but this 'wall' is brilliantly broken down: 14.Rxb7! Bxb7 15.Qe6+, and now:

A) 15...Kd8 16.Rd1+ Kc7 17.Qd6+ Kc8 (Black is mated more quickly after 17...Kb6 18.Be3+) 18.Be6+, and mate follows;

B) 15...Ne7 16.Qf7+ Kd8 17.Rd1+ Nd7 18.Be6 Bc8 19.Qxg7, and there is no salvation for Black. Here's an example of how White can finish the slaughter: 19...Re8 20.Qxf6 exf4 21.Ne5 Kc7 22.Bxd7 Qxc3 23.Qd6+ Kb6 24.Rb1+ Ka5 25.Nc4+ Qxc4 26.Qa3+ Qa4 27.Qc3+ and mate.

### 14.Red1!

Mobilizing his second rook, and increasing the number of threats.

### 14...Nd7

After this move the combination follows that is running like a *leitmotiv* through this jumble of variations.

14...Bf6 15.Nxe5! Be7 also runs into the typical sacrifice 16.Bxf7+! Kf8 17.Qc7, and there is no way for Black to get out of this hornets' nest either; in case of 14...Qa5 White has prepared another surprise attack in broad daylight: 15.Rxb7! Bxb7 16.Bxf7+Kxf7 17.Ng5+ Ke8 18.Qe6+ Ne7 19.Qf7#. White's pieces are cooperating most artistically.



**15.Bxf7+! Kxf7 16.Ng5+ Ke8 17.Qe6+**

And Black resigned.

After both 17...Ne7 18.Qf7+ Kd8 19.Ne6# and 17...Kd8 18.Nf7+ Kc7 19.Qd6#, Black is mated.

**Back**

**20.2 Ljubojevic,Ljubomir**  
**Calvo Minguez,Ricardo**  
Lanzarote 1973



This position, which is still known from an obscure opening line, yields White a quick win.

**9.Qxg7! Rf8 10.a4! Nd6**

White is still a piece behind, but the threat of Nc3-d5 is in the air.

**11.Nc3 Nf5?**

Black caves in quite quickly. The only move was 11...c6, but after 12.Qf6! Nc4 13.d3, White wins back his piece with interest.

**12.Nd5! f6 13.Qxh7d6 14.Qg6+**

And Black resigned.

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## 20.3 Fischer,Robert Fine,Reuben

New York 1963



Almost all the players in the world have once in their career availed themselves of the Evans Gambit. The first unofficial World Champion, Paul Morphy, frequently employed the gambit, and he has left many interesting attacking games to posterity. His fellow countryman Bobby Fischer once wrote that he considered Morphy to be one of his great heroes, and Fischer also couldn't refrain from digging up the gambit every once in a while. In this position White has already sacrificed two pawns, so he will have to take some drastic measures in order to obtain compensation for them.

### 10.Nd5!

With this move Fischer disturbs the cohesion between the black pieces, and succeeds in opening the e-file.

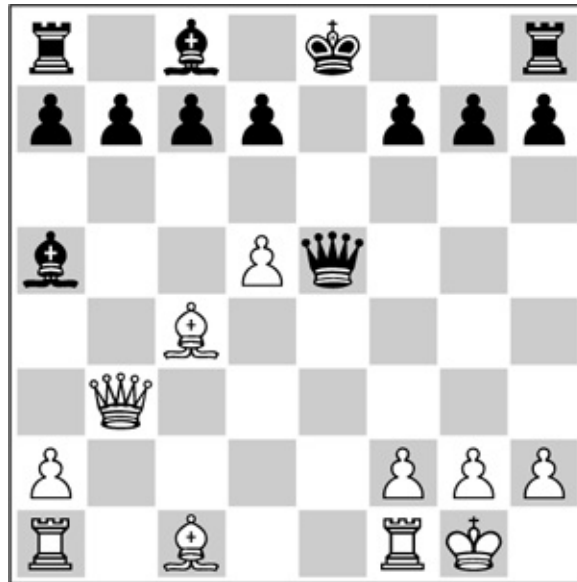
### 10...Nxd5

To 10...Qxe4 White has also prepared a fitting reply: 11.Bg5!. After 11...Nxd5 12.Bxd5 Qg6, White sacrifices an exchange in order to drive the black king definitively into a corner: 13.Rfe1+ Bxe1 14.Rxe1+ Kf8 15.Qe3, and Black must give up the queen, because 15...f6 fails to 16.Bxc6 dxc6 17.Qe7+ Kg8 18.Qd8+ Kf7 19.Re7#.

### 11.exd5Ne5

After 11...Nd8 12.Ba3 d6, White wins a piece with the simple 13.Qb5+.

### 12.Nxe5 Qxe5



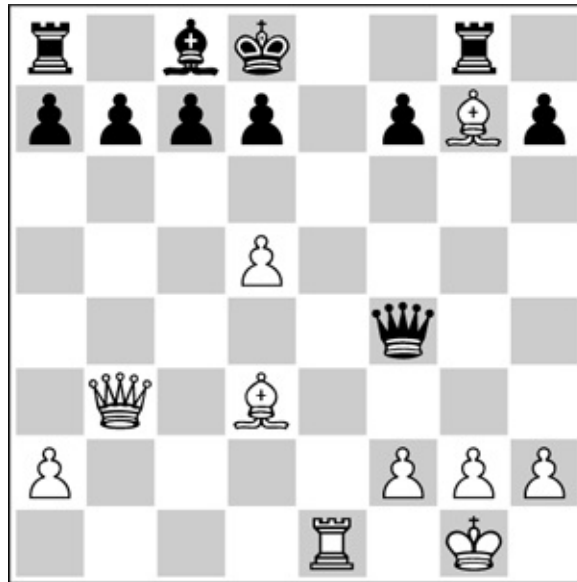
### 13.Bb2

If we take a glance at this position, we see that White has mobilized virtually his entire force, whereas Black still has various problems. Apart from the main point that his king is still in the centre, he experiences great problems with the development of his queenside. Therefore, his lack of activity will soon prove fatal to him.

### 13...Qg5?!

After this move the white attack runs like clockwork. Black should have prevented a rook from coming to e1 as long as possible, for instance with 13... Qe4 14.Bxg7 Rg8 15.Bd3, and now:

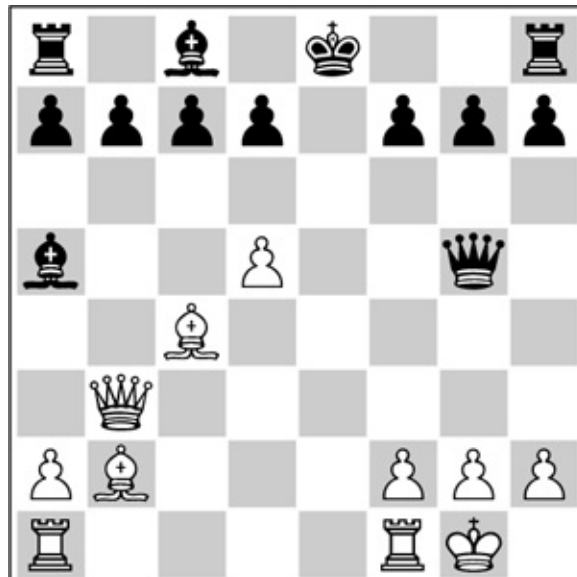
A) After 15... Qf4?!, events develop very quickly again: 16.Rfe1+! (in this position White should not be afraid to sacrifice an exchange) 16...Bxe1 17.Rxe1+ Kd8.



Analysis diagram

And now White has the artistic 18.Qb4!! up his sleeve. An instructive swap. White exchanges one of his opponent's active pieces, who will now have to compete with an entire white army;

B) After 15...Qe7, White must determine how he wants to maintain the initiative: 16.Bc3! (also attractive is 16.d6!? cxd6 17.Bc3 Qg5 18.g3 Bxc3 19.Qxc3 Qg7 20.Rfe1+ Kf8 21.Qb4 Qf6, but Black is still in the game here) 16...Bxc3 17.Qxc3 Kf8 18.Rae1 Qg5, and now 19.Be4! is the strongest move. White keeps the third rank open for a rook. 19...c6 (bitter necessity; 19...d6 fails to 20.Qxc7) 20.Re3! and Black will not be able to cope with the many threats.



#### 14.h4!

Again the correct strategy: keeping the opponent busy. Fischer carries this out perfectly.

#### 14...Qxh4

Black allows his structure to be blown apart. Also after 14...Qh6 15.Qa3, intending 16.Rae1+, the game is decided immediately.

The other move, 14...Qg4, in order at least to protect the pawn on g7 for a little longer, again fails to 15.Qa3! d6 (after 15...Kd8 16.Qxa5 Qxc4 17.Bxg7, the black position falls to pieces) 16.Qxa5 Qxc4 17.Bxg7 Rg8 18.Rac1 Qg4 19.Rfe1+, the white attack again strikes home. Please note that White has brought all his pieces into play, whereas Black still hasn't been able to complete his development.

#### 15.Bxg7Rg8 16.Rfe1+

The last pieces are brought into play.

#### 16...Kd8

Black gets an exchange into the bargain, but it doesn't make any difference: 16...Bxe1 17.Rxe1+.

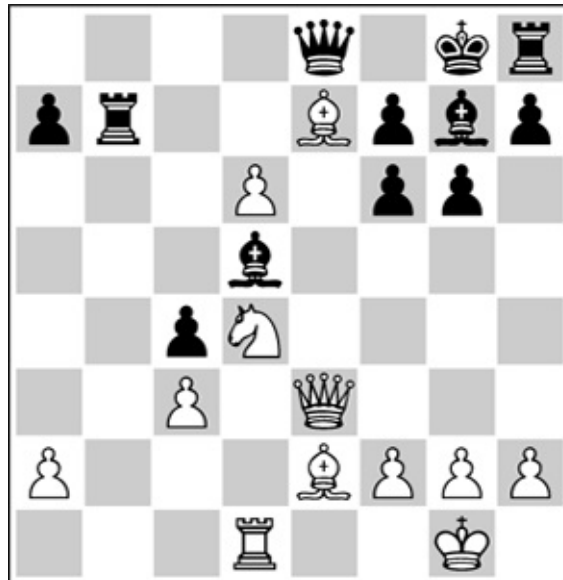


#### 17.Qg3!

A beautiful final move. After 17...Qxg3, 18.Bf6# would be a fitting conclusion.

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**20.4 Grooten,Herman**  
**Goormachtigh,Johan**  
Belgium tt 1991/92 (4)



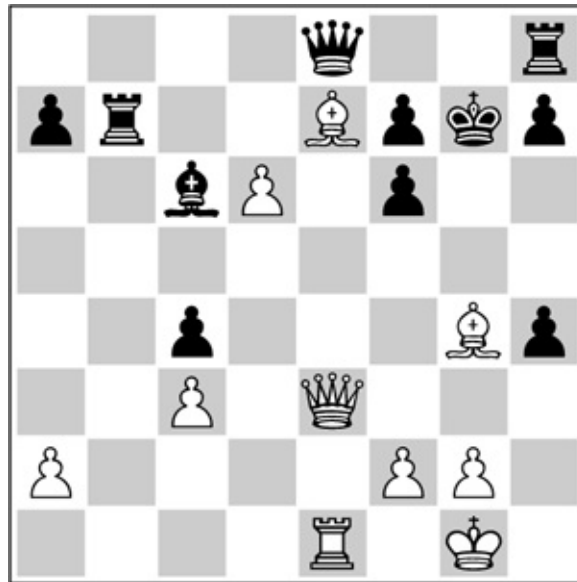
White has invested an exchange because he is fully developed. Black faces the major problem that his h8 rook cannot be brought into play, and that his pieces do not coordinate. There are bound to be tactical devices with which this surplus can be converted into something concrete.

**23.Nf5!**

With this move Black is kept busy, so that he has no time to work on the improvement of his position.

**23...Be6?**

23...Bc6!? 24.Nxg7 (remarkably enough, this swap, with which White appears to solve Black's problem of his passive pieces on the kingside, is White's best chance) 24...Kxg7 25.Re1! (White's idea is to work with the threats Qd4 and in some cases even Bxf6+. For this purpose, the white rook must be placed on the e-file first) 25...g5 26.h4 gxh4 27.Bg4! (White protects the f5-square, now threatening Bxf6+ Kxf6 followed by Qh6).



Analysis diagram

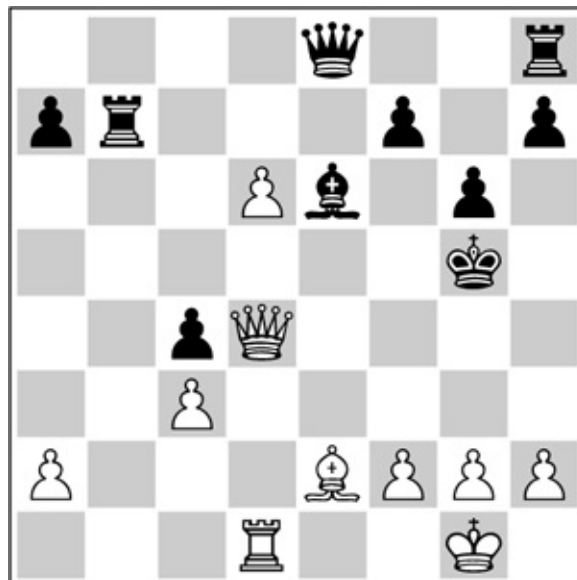
27...h6 (27...Rxe7 28.dxe7) 28.Qd4, and the threat of Qxf6 or Bxf6 cannot be parried in a decent way.

23...gxf5 looks relatively better, but after 24.Rxd5 Rb1+ 25.Bf1 Qd7, White has the strong 26.Rc5! Rb7 27.Bxc4, after which there is no more hope.

**24.Nxg7!**

This does not look logical; White lends his opponent a helping hand with the development of his kingside. However, this swap is based on a nice combination.

**24\_.Kxg7 25.Bxf6+! Kxf6 26.Qd4+ Kg5**



**27.Qg7!**

During the game, a teammate directed my attention to a striking resemblance with the combination from the famous Petrosian-Pachman game.

**Petrosian,Tigran**

**Pachman,Ludek**

Bled 1961 (6)



In this position Petrosian carried out a combination with a highly original point.

**19.Qxf6+!!**

Driving the king out into the open.

**19...Kxf6 20.Be5+ Kg5 21.Bg7!**

After this beautiful quiet move it is all over. Mate is forced.

Back to our game.

**27...Bg4 28.Rd5+ f5 29.h4+!**

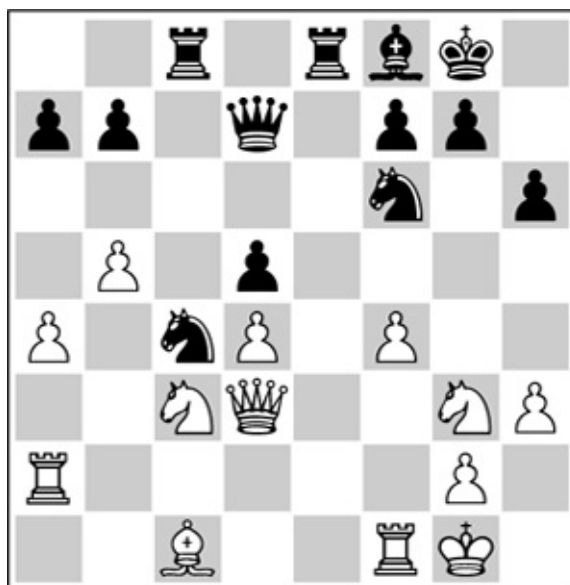
Black resigned, as mate is inevitable. For example, 29...Kh5 runs into 30.Rxf5+ gxf5 31.Qg5#, and 29...Kxh4 30.Qh6+ Bh5 31.g3+ Kh3 32.Bf1+ Kg4 33.Qf4# is also mate.

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## Solutions to Chapter 21

### 21.1 Stolberg, Mark Botvinnik, Mikhail

Moscow ch-URS 1940 (7)



If you have chosen

#### 22...Bb4!

you are completely right. The white knight on c3 fulfils an important defensive role in the centre, and it is chased away by the text move.

#### 23.Nd1

Otherwise Black will trade off his bishop for the knight, and follow up with ... Nf6-e4, ending up with a good knight versus a bad bishop. After 23.Nce2, 23... h5! is a strong move. The other guardian of the e4-square threatens to be expelled, and obviously 24.h4 will result in lethal weaknesses on the light squares.

#### 23...Ne4 24.f5

White tries to give his bishop some more elbow room.

#### 24...Nxf3

It would have been more useful to start with 24...Be7, after which the bishop can take up an important position on f6.

#### 25.Qxg3 Bd6 26.Qf3 Be7

Parrying the threat of f5-f6.

#### 27.Qg3?!



Better was 27.Nc3 Bf6 28.Qd3, after which Black would still have something to prove.

**27...Bf6 28.Bxh6**

This cannot hurt Black one bit. Thanks to his strong central position, he has nothing to fear.

**28...Bxd4+29.Kh1 f6**

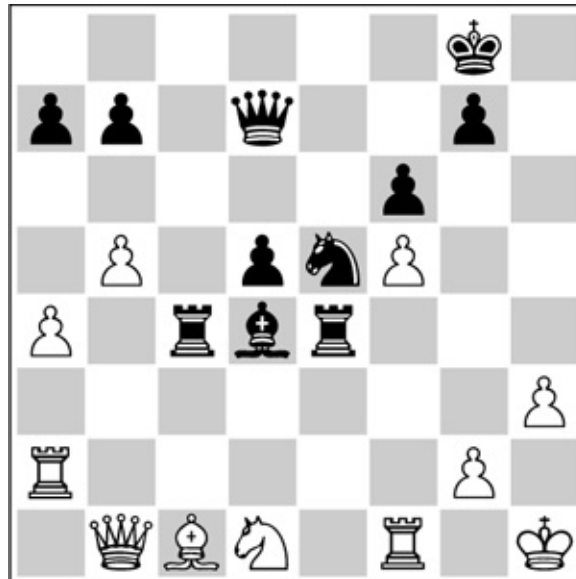
Another interesting plan was 29...Be5!? 30.Qg4 Nd6 31.Bd2 Ne4 32.Bf4 Qc7, and here also, the centralized black pieces rule the roost.

**30.Bc1 Re4!**

The triumph of a strongly carried-out centralization! The pressure radiated by the black pieces soon becomes too much for White.

**31.Qd3 Ne5 32.Qb1 Rc4**

This may not even be the best move, but Botvinnik must have played it with relish.



**33.a5**

The beautiful point is that after, for instance, 33.Bd2 Qd6 34.Qb3, Black can best continue with the aesthetically sound 34...Qc5!, completing the centralization.

**33...Bc5 34.b6 a6 35.Nb2?**

Here also, 35.Bd2 is the only move to stay alive, although also then, Black would maintain a large advantage with 35...Re2.

**35...Rc3**

There is nothing wrong with this move in itself, but there was something more concrete with which Black could have taken control of the game.

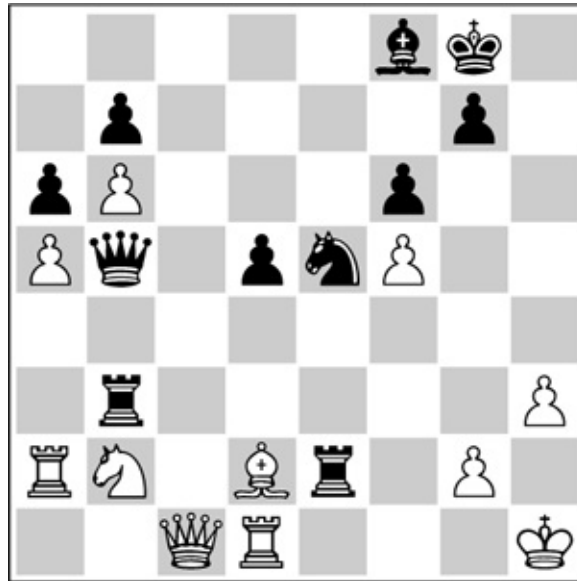
With 35...Qb5!, Black could have made optimum use of White's bad 35th move, for example: 36.Bd2 Rc2! 37.Rd1 (37.Qxc2 Qxf1+ 38.Kh2 Qg1+ 39.Kg3 Bf2#)

37...Qb3 38.Qa1 Qg3, with the threats of 39...Nf3 and 39...Ng4.

**36.Bd2 Rb3 37.Qc2 Qb5 38.Rc1 Bf8 39.Rd1 Re2**

The career of the central pieces has been a successful one: the black pieces dominate the entire battlefield, whereas all of White's pieces are misplaced.

**40.Qc1**



**40...Rxf3+!**

That was bound to happen, of course. The white king now falls prey to the hungry black pieces.

**41.gxh3d4!**

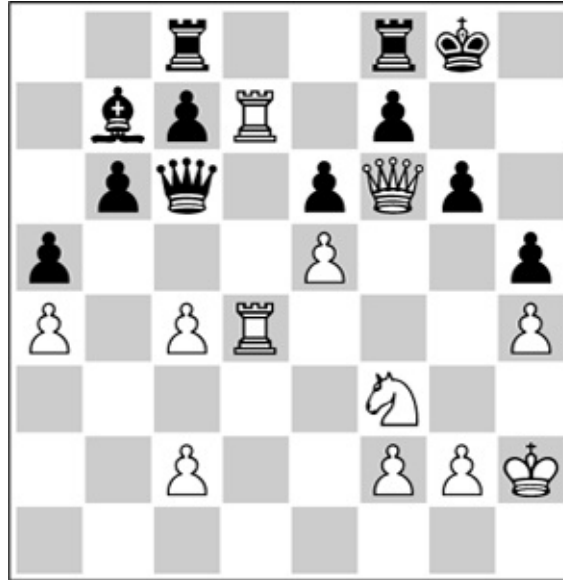
White resigned, since there is no remedy anymore for 42...Qd5+, followed by mate.

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# Bh3!!

# Timmanjan

Tilburg 1991 (4)



Timman saw a little too late what his opponent wanted to undertake in this position.

**32.Kg3!**

The start of an incredible king march. With a board full of pieces, the monarch is on his way to the square h6, where he helps to construct a mate.

**32...Rce8 33.Kf4!**

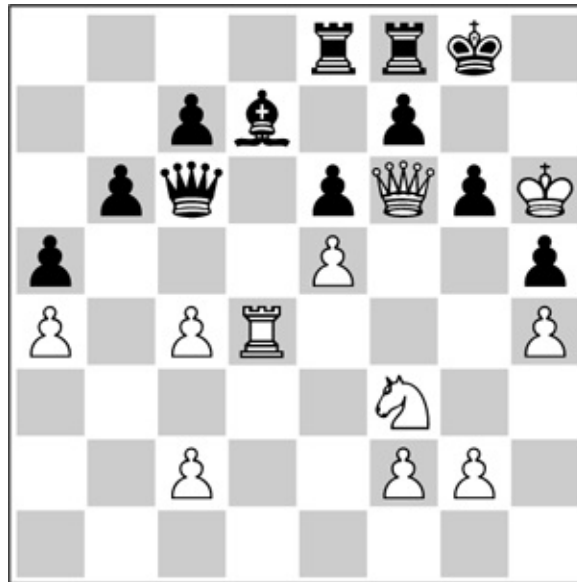
It is well-known that the king is a strong piece in the endgame, but that it could lend a hand in a mating attack is less obvious. The king manoeuvre is made possible by the strongly-centralized white pieces.

33...Bc8 34.Kg5 Bxd7

Now 34...Kh7 is met by 35.Qxg6+ Kh8 36.Qh6+ Kg8 37.Kf6!, and again the white king has the final word.

## 35.Kh6

**1-0**



A highly original concept.

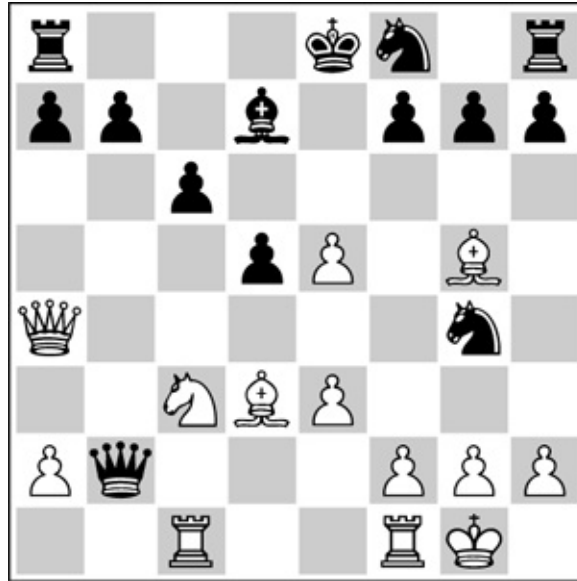
QO 11.4 (D43)

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**21.3 Yusupov, Artur**  
**Nogueiras Santiago Jesus**

Montpellier ct 1985 (2)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bg5 Nbd7 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e3 Bd6 8.Bd3**  
**Nf8 9.Ne5 Qb6 10.0-0 Bxe5 11.dxe5 Ng4 12.Qa4 Qxb2 13.Rac1 Bd7**



**14.Qd4!!**

With this ‘super-centralization’, White creates no less than five direct threats:

15.Nxd5 Qxd4 16.Nc7#;

15.Nb5 Qxd4 16.Nc7/d6#;

15.Ne4 Qxd4 16.Nd6#; 15.Rb1 Qa3 16.Rxb7;

15.e6 Bxe6 16.Qxg7.

It is clearly impossible for Black to defend against so many threats at the same time.

White could also have changed tack with 14.Rc2!? Qb6 15.Rb1 Qc7, and now:

A) Not the attractive 16.Nxd5?! in view of 16...Qxe5, and Black gets the upper hand;

B) Also after 16.Bf4 Ne6, Black easily stays on his feet, since 17.Nxd5? fails to 17...cxd5;

C) But after the amazing 16.Qb4! (a move that is not given by Dvoretsky in his excellent book *Secrets of Chess Tactics*) 16...Qxe5 (forced, since after 16...Be6, 17.Nb5 wins on the spot), White has the strong 17.f4!. After 17...Qxe3+ 18.Kh1, the mate threat on e7 will prove fatal to Black: 18...f6 19.Re2 and Black loses his queen.

**14...f6 15.exf6 gxf6?!**

15...Nxf6 was preferable, but after 16.Bxf6 Ne6 17.Qh4 gxf6 18.Qxf6 Rf8 19.Qe5, the same fate would have befallen Black.

**16.Bxf6 Rg8**

Now 16...Ne6 is impossible as the Ng4 is hanging. After 16...Nxf6 17.Qxf6 Rg8, 18.Nxd5 wins.

**17.Nb5!**

Now White plays another trump card.

**17...Qxb5**

17...Qxd4 18.Nd6 is still mate!

**18.Bxb5 Ne6 19.Qb2 cxb5 20.Bh4**

And since Black will end up with too little material, he resigned.

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## 21.4 Sokolov,Ivan Plaskett,James

Hastings 1998/99 (9)



If the opponent's pieces are on one side of the board, it is often a good strategy to head in the other direction. That was what Sokolov did when he played:

## 24.Qg4

## Attacking the vulnerable g7-point.

24...g6

The only move.

## 25.Qg5!

The neat point. The queen strives for the beautiful central square e5, where it supports the mating attack optimally. Since the d5 knight may never leave its post as then the long diagonal can be opened with d4-d5, it has become impossible for Black to use his misplaced pieces for the defence.

## 25...Bxe1

Following the motto: ‘dying with a full stomach’. Black could also have tried to protect the e5-square with 25...Nc4, but then 26.Qh6! would have brought on the decision: 26...gxh5 27.Ng5, and if Black protects the weak point h7, the long diagonal will be his undoing: 27...Nf6 28.Nxh7! Nxh7 29.d5+and mate.

## 26.Qe5+ Rf6

Even worse is 26...Nf6 27.Qxb5 Nxb5 28.d5+Ng7 29.Qb2.

## 27.Nexf6 Nc4

In this way Black seems to be able to get something done, but after

**28.Qxe1 gxf5**

White has prepared another strong reply.



## 29.Bd7

Black gave up the fight, since after 29...Qa5 30.Qe8+ Kg7 31.Nxh5+ Kh6 32.Qe6+! Kxh5 33.g4+ Kg5 34.h4+! Kf4 (34...Kxh4 35.Qh6#) 35.Qf5#, he is artistically mated. If White had wanted to finish the game in style, he could have opted for another centralizing queen move: 29.Qe4 Nxf6 30.d5 Kg7 (30...Nb2 31.Qe5) 31.Qf5, and mate is inevitable.

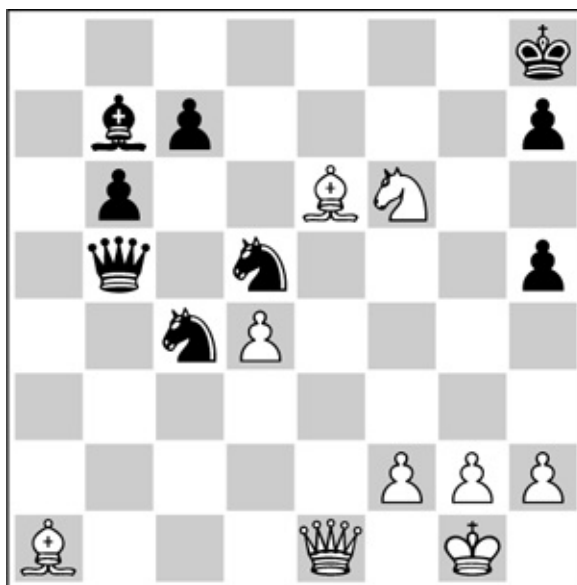
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## Solutions to Chapter 22

### 22.1 Réti,Richard Grünfeld,Ernst

Semmering 1926 (7)



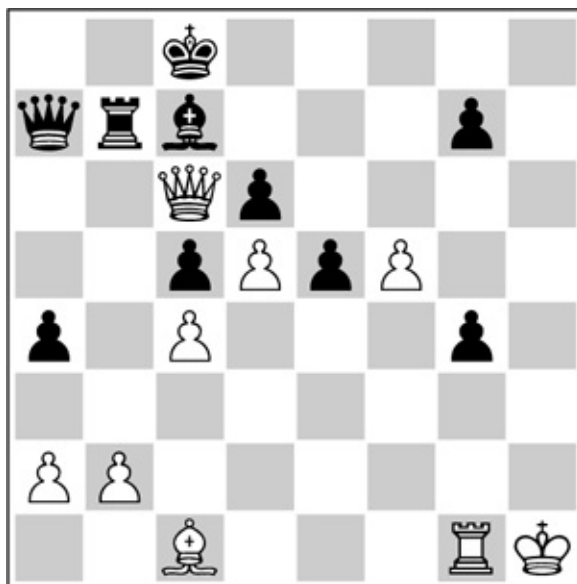
In this position White came up with the pointed

**39.Rxe8! Rxe8 40.Qh3!**

The queen threatens to enter the black lines with gain of tempo.

**40...Bf6?!**

A perfectly logical move, but Black should have defended with the venomous 40...g4!. The intention of this move is to disturb the cooperation between the white forces temporarily. After 41.Bxe8+ Kxe8 42.Qh5+ Kd7, the white queen will pay a visit nevertheless, and Black will taste defeat. For example: 43.Qf7 Kc8 44.Qe8+ Bd8 45.Qc6+ Rc7 (not 45...Bc7



Analysis diagram

46.f6! gxf6 47.Rxg4 and White breaks through) 46.Qxd6, and virtually all of Black's pawns are short-listed to be eaten.

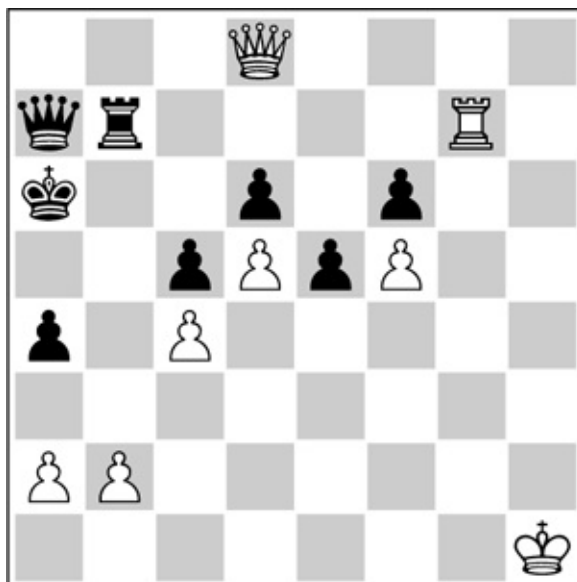
**41.Bxe8+ Kxe8 42.Qh8+ Kd7 43.Bxg5**

Exchanging the most important defender, in order to give White's major pieces free rein.

**43...Kc7**

Black tries to run for it, but his king will not reach safety. 43...Qb8 is no alternative on account of 44.Qh7!, after which the white threats are too strong: 44...Kc8 (44...Bd8 45.Bxd8 Kxd8 46.f6!, and the breakthrough will secure the win for White; 44...Qe8 45.Bxf6) 45.Bxf6, and the bishop cannot be recaptured under penalty of mate.

**44.Bxf6 gxf6 45.Rg7+ Kb6 46.Qd8+ Ka6**



**47.Qe8!**

After this measured reply, it is all over.

**47...Ka5**

The rook is taboo in view of 48.Qb5#, and the threat of 48.Qxa4+ can only be parried by 47...Ka5, after which 48.Qc6! is a killer.

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**22.2 Petrosian, Tigran**  
**Bondarevsky, Igor**  
Moscow ch-URS 1950



White stands better thanks to his huge space advantage. As Capablanca once wrote, for the side that has the advantage it is necessary to create play on both wings. He claimed that opening a file on two sides is highly necessary. The question here is on which kingside file White hopes to be successful: the g-file or the h-file.

With the somewhat surprising

**25.gxh4!**

Petrosian manages to obtain an important positional advantage on the kingside as well. Apparently he opts for the conquest of the g-file and he doesn't see much good coming from a struggle along the h-file.

25.Nf3 hxg3 26.hxg3 looks good as well, but after 26...Kf7 Black can engage in the battle on the h-file. Apparently Petrosian considered that this did not yield him enough of an advantage.

After the forced

**25...Bxh4 26.Nf3 Bd8**

he played

**27.h4**

which is the point of the swap on h4. White definitively fixes the weakness of the g5-square, and he has opened the g-file for his major pieces. As Black also has a weakness on a6 and a lack of space, which prevents him from placing his pieces on good squares, things will go rapidly downhill for him.

**27...Qh5 28.Be1 Bd7 29.Qf2 Kf7**

This mistake drastically shortens the game. As Black will soon lose the pawn on a6, the question arises if he could not have kept grimly protecting the pawn with 29...Bc8 30.Bf1 Ra7 31.R4a2, and White prepares a doubling on the g-file.



**30.Bf1 Rh8 31.Bxa6**

White thankfully accepts the offered pawn.

**31...Nxa6 32.Rxa6 Be7 33.Ra7 Rhb8 34.Rxb7 Rxb7 35.Nd4**

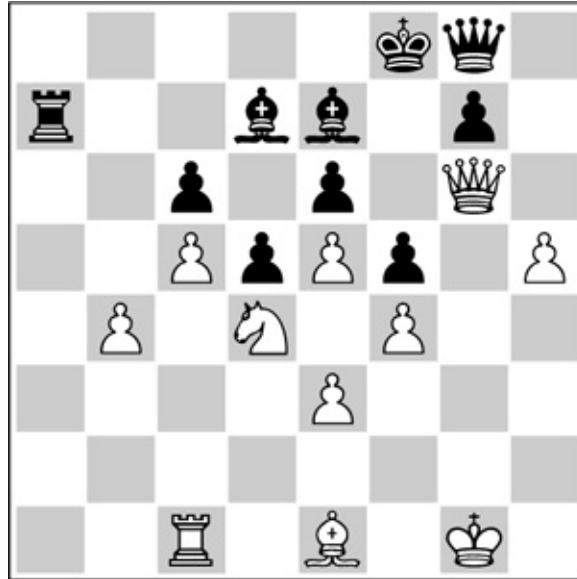
Here the knight is optimally placed, and this once more underlines the opponent's powerlessness. The black pieces do not work well, and he is forced to sit and watch how White slowly increases his advantage.

**35...Qh8**

Probably a better 'half-move' was 35...Rc7.

**36.Qg3**





**40.b5!**

This breakthrough, which was already in the air for a while, is decisive also here.

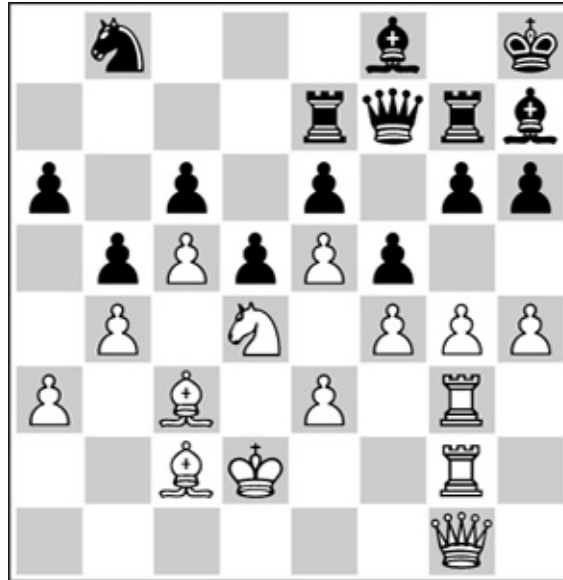
**40...Qf7 41.bxc6Bc8**

Adjourned and, later, resigned. After 42.Rb1 Bxc5 43.Rb8 Rc7 44.Nxe6+, the building definitively collapses.

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## 22.3 Grooten,Herman Klip,Hans

Enschede 1991 (7)



Already in the early middlegame, a trench war has unfolded, where White is preparing to break through on the kingside. In spite of a dire lack of space, the black player has taken up the most decent position possible. In order to avoid unnecessary risks when the position is opened, White has walked to d2 with his king, so as not to fall victim to some ‘accident’. In the diagram position he considers the time is finally ripe to attack the black pawn formation:

### 51.h5! gxh5

On 51...fxg4, White deals a decisive blow with 52.hxg6. After 52...Bxg6 53.Bxg6 Rxg6 (in case of 53...Qxg6 54.Rxg4 Qh7 55.Rxg7 Bxg7 56.Rg6 Qg8, White cashes in the point with the prosaic 57.Qg4), the white pieces also enter via the g-file: 54.Rxg4!? Rxg4 55.Rxg4 Qh7, and also here there is nothing wrong with the breakthrough 56.f5! exf5 57.Nxf5, after which Black can pack it in.

### 52.gxf5

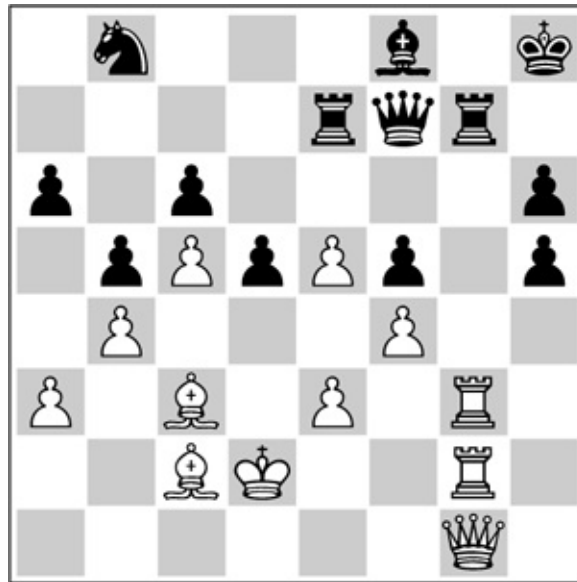
Of course, White captures towards the centre. Now the a1-h8 diagonal is opened, after which the black king is decisively driven into a corner.

### 52...Bxf5

After 52...Rxg3 53.Rxg3 h4 54.Rg4, Black has to wait for the bishop on c3 to start its demolition job. For example: 54...h3 55.Nxe6 Bxf5 56.Nxf8 Qxf8 57.e6+ Kh7 58.Bxf5+ Qxf5 59.Rg7+.

### 53.Nxf5exf5





**54.e6**

Also here, White opens the long diagonal.

54...Qg8 55.Bxf5

And Black had seen enough.

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**22.4 Capablanca,jose**  
**Treybal,Karel**  
Carlsbad 1929 (10)



In this closed position, with only one open file, White can still force a win. For this purpose, he must pinpoint the most vulnerable point in the enemy position.

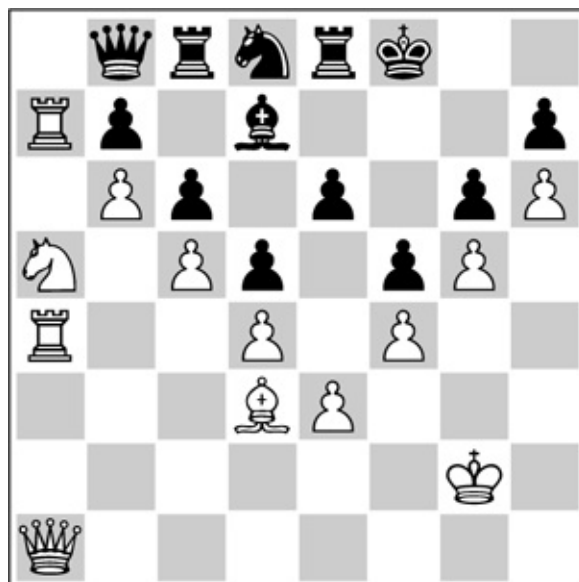
**52.Nd2**

White plays his knight to a5 via Nf3-d2-b3, in order to take aim at the weak point b7.

**52...Bd7**

Black must hurry if he wants to be able to play the protecting move ...Nf7-d8. He cannot give the b7 pawn extra protection with ...Rd7, as he will then lose material with Ra8.

**53.Nb3 Re8 54.Na5 Nd8**



Black has managed to protect everything, but with the following hammer-blow, he is counted out nonetheless.

**55.Ba6!**

Thus White makes a hole in the black pawn formation and clears a path along the seventh rank.

**55...bxa6 56.Rxd7Re7**

Parrying Rxh7 for the moment, but allowing a decisive blow.

**57.Rxd8+! Rxd8 58.Nxc6**

**1-0**

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## Chapter 25

# Epilogue

## 25.1 Introduction

In this book we have made an attempt to help the club player on his way in his quest to improve his play. As indicated in the beginning, positional play is one of the most difficult components of the game of chess. In Chapter 1, I have indicated that I like to use my training sessions to enhance the general understanding. Questions like: ‘How do I devise a plan?’ or ‘What are the characteristics of a position?’ must serve as beacons, helping us to master the difficult problems.

## 25.2 The essence of the position

The leitmotiv in this book is Steinitz’s Table of Elements. In this Table, the strategic advantages that can occur in the middlegame are named. In the former Soviet Union, this table was used as a stepping-stone for the trainings held there. It is not surprising that, if the chess student sees many examples of each theme, his level of understanding will rise significantly. This may be one of the explanations why today there is still a large number of strong players emerging from the former Warsaw Pact countries.

We have to make a few marginal comments here. The word ‘element’ suggests that we are dealing with ‘the smallest part’. In other words: if you have reduced the theme to its most elementary form, you might deduce from this that the formulated rule should always apply. In practice, this is unfortunately not the case. For example, we know that the ‘pawn islands rule’ (Chapter 10) does not always apply. In fact there are plenty of exceptions, which makes you wonder about the use of such a rule. Therefore, the term ‘element’ does not fully correspond with its meaning, but that does not need to prevent us from regarding ‘Steinitz’s Table of Elements’ as a fine summary, which provides us players with a number of rules of thumb and handles, which we can use to orientate ourselves in difficult middlegame situations.

We should not lose sight of the fact that in one game several themes may influence each other. The trick is to discover what the most ‘dominant feature’ is in a position, as grandmaster Adrian Mikhalchishin once preached during a clinic with top talents in Holland.

Therefore, it is important to ‘delve deep into a position’ in order to compare the various features with each other, and to weigh up which aspects play the most crucial role. In Holland we have always had Jan Timman, who in his analysis

spoke of 'the essence of the position' that had to be discovered. From him I have selected the following subtle fragment.

□ **Timman, Jan**

■ **Kasparov, Garry**

Tilburg 1981 (4)

In the diagram position, Black has sacrificed an exchange for a strong passed pawn and a powerful knight on c5. In order to give an answer to the question how White should 'break' this force, Timman gave the following comment in the magazine Schaakbulletin:



An important moment in the game. The black knight on c5, in combination with the b-pawn, constitutes an enormous force in the black position. To break this force, 27.Nb3 is insufficient, as after the exchange the other knight would emerge on c5. The text move cuts off the road of the king's knight to the queenside'.

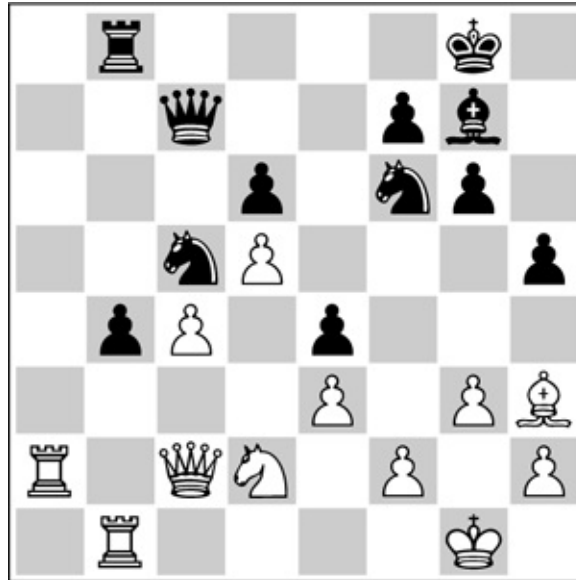
**27.Bh3!**

After a normal move like 27.Nb3, there follows 27...Nfd7, with which Black keeps his strong blockade on the dark squares intact. By the way, Black should not play 27...Nxb3?, as after 28.Rxb3 Nd7 29.Rab1 Qa5 30.Qd2! (30.Qb2? Bg7!) the b4 pawn falls. The alternative 27.Ra2!?, with which White anticipates the threat of ...Bh6-g7, transposes to the game. The text move is much better than 27.Nxe4?! Nfxe4 28.Bxe4 b3, and Black wins back material.

**27...Bg7 28.Ra2h5**

This looks like an aggressive move, but its real meaning becomes clear in the

following variation: 28...Nfd7 29.Bxd7 Qxd7 30.Nxe4 b3 31.Nxc5 bxc2 32.Rxb8+ Bf8 33.Nxd7 c1Q+ 34.Kg2, and White wins. By playing ...h5, Black vacates the h7-square for his king.



### 29.Nb3!

In this way, White chases away the strong knight from c5, breaking the 'force' in Black's position. The 'connection' between Black's two knights has been cut off with the move 27.Bh3!.

### 29...Nd3

After the exchange of a pair of knights, White's task would be made significantly easier.

### 30.Rd1

White steers towards simplifications. He simply threatens to give back the exchange with 31.Rxd3, after which he will remain a pawn up.

Probably there was an even better possibility. With 30.Bf1! Ne5 31.Be2 h4 32.Nd4, the weakness of the b4 pawn, coupled with the possession of the a-file, would have given White a decisive advantage. Black's compensation has disappeared like snow in summer.

### 30...Ne5?!

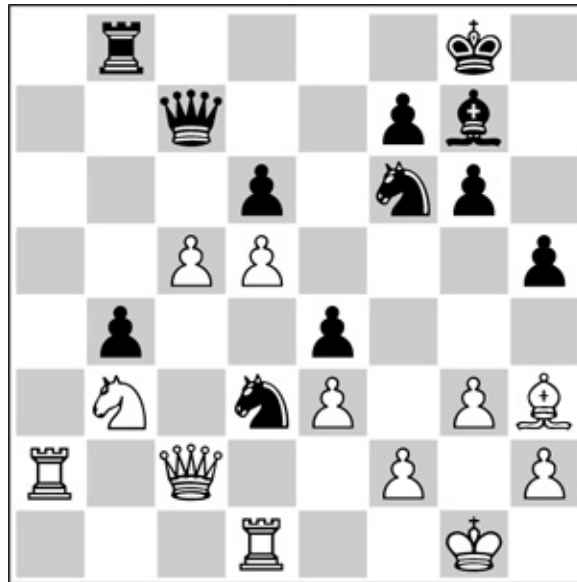
With this, Black's concept has also misfired. The downside of this move is, of course, that the once so beautiful blockade on the square c5 is now broken. White immediately exploits this.

With 30...Ng4!? 31.Bxg4 hxg4, Black would have stayed in the game, although after 32.Ra6! White is also pulling the strings.

Now Timman breaks through definitively.

### 31.c5! Nd3

Timman writes: 'A slight surprise, and this is also the best way to fight back. After the return of the black knight, the white d-pawn has become in need of help.'



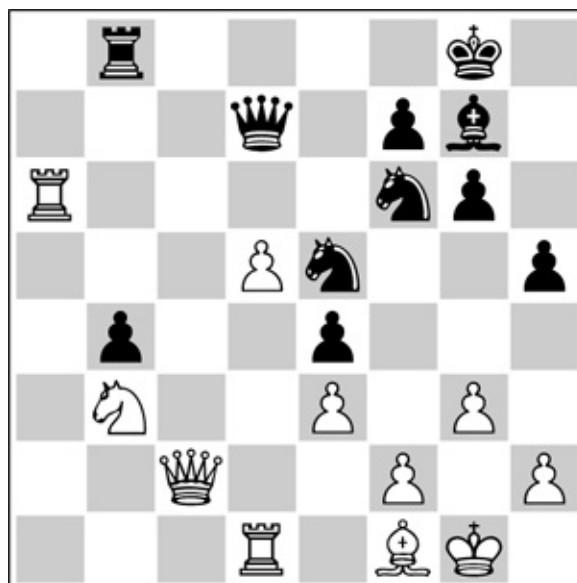
**32.cxd6 Qxd6 33.Bf1 Ne5**

Indirect protection of the b-pawn, since 33...Nxd5 would now fail to 34.Bxd3 Nc3 35.Be2.

**34.Ra6**

The secondary intention behind White's last move.

**34...Qd7**

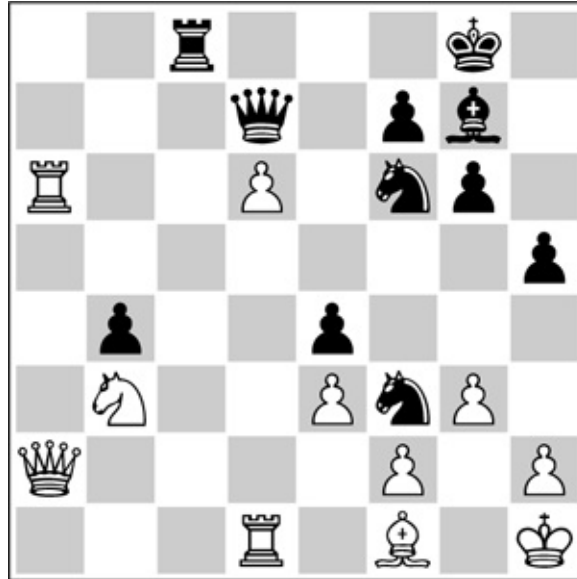


**35.Rxf6**

White returns the exchange with pleasure. Not only will he now be a healthy



pawn up, he also takes the edge off the desperate offensive on White's vulnerable king position that Kasparov was preparing.  
 A strong alternative was 35.d6, with the threat 36.Qc7. After 35...Rc8 36.Qa2 Nf3+37.Kh1



Analysis diagram

the 'desperate offensive' would also accomplish little. Thus: 37...Bf8 (after 37...Qf5 38.Ra5, the queen cannot maintain her active placement; or 37...Ng4 38.h3, and the knight must return empty-handed) 38.Ra7 Qe6 39.Nd2, and White exchanges queens, after which all counterplay fades away as well.

**35...Bxf6 36.Qxe4 Rc8?!**

In time-trouble Black blunders his b-pawn. He should have tried 36...Qg4, in order to make the technical job difficult for White after 37.Qxg4 hxg4. But in those days Kasparov was not the man to defend a bad position passively.

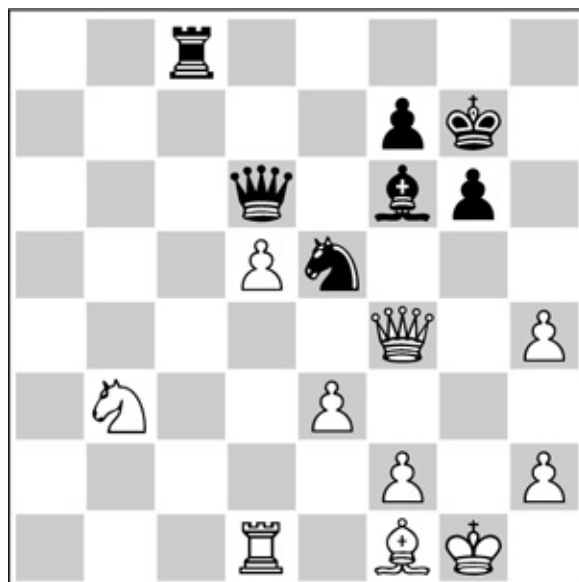
Another idea was 36...Qa4, in order, after 37.Qc2, to continue with 37...h4, and although also here White is a healthy pawn up, he still has to demonstrate some technique.

**37.Qxb4 h4 38.Qf4 Kg7 39.gxh4**

Removing the final sting from the position.

**39...Qd6**

After 39...Rh8 40.Nc5!, Black has nothing left to hope for either.



#### 40.Nd2

1-0

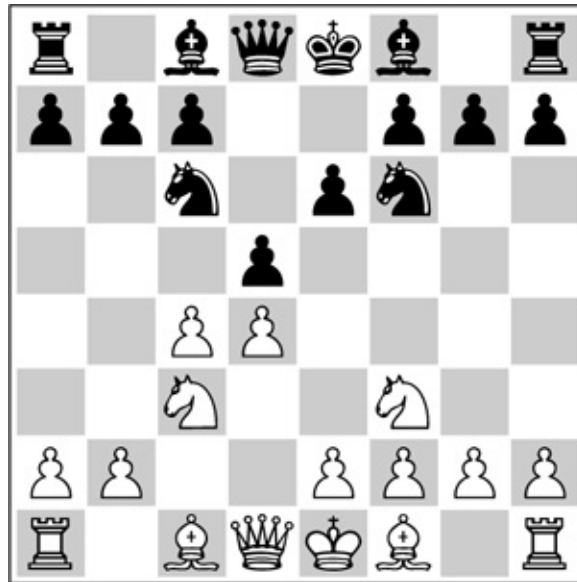
Before Black had the time to resign, his flag fell. He is lost after 40...Qxd5 41.Ne4 Qe6 (strictly speaking, 41...Qxd1 is better, but also in that event the win is not too difficult after 42.Qxf6+ Kg8 43.Qxe5 Rc1 44.Ng3) 42.Bh3! Qxh3 43.Qxf6+ Kg8 44.Rd8+ Rxd8 45.Qxd8+ Kg7 46.Qf6+ Kg8 47.Qxe5.

The essence of the above fragment is that White had to find out how he could break Black's strong force on the dark squares. Together, the rook on b8 and the pawn on b4, in cooperation with the strong knight on c5, formed a bastion that was hard to attack. With Nb3, one of the knights could have been swapped, but its place would have been taken by the other knight after ...Nfd7, and White would have gained nothing by this. This gave White the brilliant idea to 'cut through' the cooperation between the knights with 27.Bg2-h3!!. To keep using 'Steinitzian' terminology, White had to disturb the cooperation between the black pieces in order to break Black's blockade on the strong square c5.

### 25.3 Some marginal notes on Steintiz's Table

IM Cor van Wijgerden, the man behind the Step-by-Step Method (see also Chapter 2), has been searching for an entirely different approach to positional play. With the help of the following example, Van Wijgerden shows what he encountered when he was discussing games with young pupils.

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Nc6**



How can you explain to an 8- or 9-year-old kid that can play a nice game of chess that this knight does not stand so well on c6? Experienced chess players know that the knight is better developed to d7 here. But any trainer will immediately feel the inner struggle when trying to explain such choices.

The reason, of course, is that young players grow up with move sequences like 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6. In the eyes of an 8- or 9-year-old, in the above position it is perfectly logical to develop the knight towards the centre. The reason that the knight does not stand so well there on principle – since it does not really attack the centre here – is not so easy to give.

The explanation should obviously be that Black must be able to put pressure on the white centre with ...c7-c5. The knight on c6 is not exerting any real pressure on the centre, as the pawn on d4 is well protected. Other reasons why the knight (even after ...c7-c5) is often still better on d7 instead of c6, are even harder to make plausible for a very young player. The most important reason is that mostly, Black will develop his bishop to b7 after ...b7-b6, after which the knight is not very functional on c6.

Now the question is: with the help of which concepts can you make clear why it is better to develop the knight (now or later) to d7? In his instruction manual of Step 6, Van Wijgerden starts with two basic notions:

- Activity
- Vulnerability

‘With these notions I can explain every move a young player makes on the board’, he once explained to me. ‘I prefer not to use rules, where I get the

exceptions into the bargain.'

With the help of these two basic notions, Van Wijgerden has succeeded in putting together training material where he has managed to mould derivative themes like 'improve the worst piece' or 'attack the weakest point' into exercise material. To readers who want to know more about this, I recommend purchasing this manual.

## **25.4 Recommendations**

Back to Steinitz's Table of Elements. Playing through and analysing many examples that are classified around a certain theme is always useful. The Table offers a structure that has proved successful with the education of young talents. With the above reflections in the back of our mind, a warning is in order: never apply a 'little rule' indiscriminately, and preferably do not adhere too dogmatically to what Steinitz has prescribed. Always examine the position you have on the board with a fresh view, and try to distill the correct continuation from the features you see. Be flexible in your thinking and, above all, don't neglect the tactical motifs, which always play a role!

But turn the knowledge you have acquired in this book to profit. Hopefully you will indeed be able to make the progress that you aspire to. I hereby express the wish that this book will help you on the right path. Good luck!

*Herman Grooten,  
March 2009*

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Kotov	Play like a Grandmaster
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Nimzowitsch	Mein System
Samarian	Das systematische Schachtraining
Stean	Simple Chess
Suba	Dynamic Chess Strategy
Suetin	Three steps to Chess Mastery
Timman	Het groot analyseboek
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## About the author

Herman Grooten is an international master who has worked as a chess trainer for more than 30 years. In this capacity, he has trained many young Dutch talents, privately or on behalf of the Dutch chess federation KNSB. For this federation he is also charged with the education of new trainers. Besides this, he gives chess lessons, lectures and clinics at chess clubs on a private basis.

Grooten has also been active in the area of chess journalism. For seventeen years he wrote the weekly chess column for the national Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, and for eight years he wrote a chess column in the regional newspaper *Het Eindhovens Dag-Mad*.

Although nowadays less active as a player, Grooten achieved a grandmaster norm in the Leeuwarden Open, 1995.